The People Have Spoken:
Global Views of Democracy

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Democracy means many things to people around the world. USIA polling in major countries in recent years shows how publics view democracy and their own governments:

- Definitions of democracy vary from country to country, sometimes taking in the Western ideal of "liberal democracy," sometimes not. The hunger for the "rule of law," however, appears nearly universal.

- In countries making the transition from less democratic to more democratic forms of rule, the desire for stability, order, and especially economic security may often be as strong or stronger than the desire for freedom and democracy. This is true in such diverse regions as eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, Latin America, and Africa.

- In more mature democracies like India, the United States, and Japan, disquiet with certain aspects of freedom and individual rights can co-exist with a fundamental commitment to the current system of government.

- In country after country there is a gap -- sometimes quite broad -- between the democratic ideals the public feels are important and the practice of these ideals.

- Many governments receive relatively low performance marks and/or confidence ratings from their constituents, yet these feelings of dissatisfaction are not always associated with overall discontent with their governmental order. This may in part be explained by the divergence between what the governed expect from their leaders and what those leaders can actually accomplish.

- While trust in most public institutions is generally low worldwide, the military in those same countries tends to receive top confidence marks. The reasons seem as varied as the societies under investigation -- a reflection of priorities (in addition to defending the homeland) such as maintaining order or protecting secularism.

- World publics appear convinced that one of the gravest threats to democracy today comes from within -- from the corrosive effects of corruption on officials at all levels.

- A set of shared attitudes and values among a nation's citizens seems to be the sine qua non for any democracy to function well or even to survive.

Contents

Introduction

With the battle between capitalism and socialism over for now, a new global issue has seized the imagination of social scientists. Whether posed as the "clash of civilizations" or "the end of history," the debate has been engaged: Whither democracy?[1] Some argue that democracy is spreading irreversibly, others that it is in retreat. Are there objective measures that can gauge where democracy stands today? Freedom House in New York issues an annual "scorecard" assessing how nations around the world stack up to its yardsticks. Its reports try to measure such variables as the degree of freedom of the press and speech and the openness of electoral procedures. The U.S. State Department does something similar with its yearly reports on human rights and on religious freedom. The Heritage Foundation publishes an annual review rating the extent of economic freedom, country by country.

This report, on the other hand, analyzes attitudes about democracy held by the people who live in countries in every region of the world.

Wrestling with Basic Concepts

There was a time, not so long ago, when most people could easily say what democracy means. They saw the world largely in terms of black and white. Nations like the United States, western European countries, and Japan were democracies. Places that called themselves "democratic republics" or "people's republics" were automatically excluded, as were dozens of other countries that demonstrably lacked mechanisms for the public to control its leaders.[2]

Today, historic definitions of democracy -- "government by the people, either directly or through elected representatives; rule by the ruled; majority rule" -- seem too limited to embrace all the values that have accrued to the idea of "democracy" over the centuries.

Consider the following propositions, many or all of which might be considered essential components of democracy in modern times:

The judicial system treats everyone equally.
There is freedom to criticize the government openly.
Honest elections are held regularly.
One can choose from several parties and candidates when voting.
The media (broadcast and print) are free to reports news and commentary without government censorship.
The rights of minorities are protected.
There is equality of opportunity between men and women.
Free health care and free education are available to all.
There is freedom to practice any religion openly.
There is economic prosperity in the country.
The government guarantees economic equality among its citizens.
The government provides for [guarantees] the basic material needs of its citizens.

Some of these attributes focus on "political" values of democracy: the rule of law, civil rights, an open and pluralistic society. The overarching significance of liberty in these propositions lends a name to the associated concept of "liberal democracy." The "social-welfare" values of the other attributes shape a somewhat different concept, that of "social democracy." To confuse matters even more, one expert suggests we are now witnessing "the rise of a disturbing phenomenon in international life -- illiberal democracy."[3] He refers to the co-option of outwardly or formally democratic practices by nondemocratic rulers.

Democracy seems to demand a certain level of economic development, even prosperity, to flourish. Moreover, as Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. has argued: "Democracy is impossible without private ownership because private property -- resources beyond the arbitrary reach of the state -- provides the only secure basis for political opposition and intellectual freedom."[4] However, as Paul Goble has written: "Democracies by themselves cannot make anyone rich, and free markets do not by themselves guarantee a democratic form of government. The two may prove to be mutually supportive, but they are not one and the same thing."[5]

Can a "fundamentalist" state be a democracy? That is unlikely, given the lack of pluralism in such a state. On the other hand, in states ruled by a secular ideology, such as communist China, organized religion itself represents a threat: an independent authority which may undermine the legitimacy of the rulers.

One of the major problems confronting democracies in the world today is that of corruption. Present in any form of government, graft and corruption are especially troubling in a democracy because they undermine the equal access to authority that is one hallmark of democracy. They also erode public trust in institutions.[6]

Democracy and Public Opinion

It is striking how many world publics these days seem to express dissatisfaction with their own freely elected leaders. In nation after nation public opinion surveys show low or falling confidence in public institutions and leadership.

The question is: Do these attitudes reflect a dissatisfaction with democracy in general, or with the way in which democratic governments perform their duties, or do they only show lack of confidence in specific leaders and institutions but retention of trust in democracy more generally?

This paper examines public attitudes in various countries worldwide on different aspects of democracy. USIA has not polled on all the relevant issues in all countries. Absent from this report almost entirely, for example, are western Europe, the Near East, and much of Asia. Discussion of issues is limited for other areas. Some countries -- including the former Yugoslavia, Turkey, and Haiti -- receive special treatment because they represent particularly timely or interesting case studies. The chapter on Latin America is longer than most because of

the rich data available for that region. What remains is, if not exhaustive, at least a good indication of where democracy stands in many parts of the world.[a]

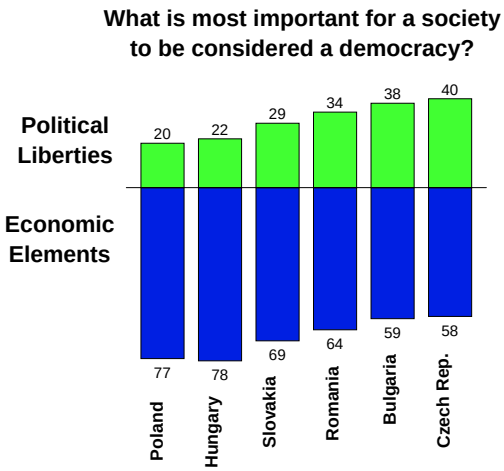
[a] A Note on Methodology: Because of the variations in democracies worldwide, the questions used in the various polls cited herein frequently differ in wording, one from another. Polls were conducted in one year in some countries but different years in others (see appendix). These variations pose some difficulties for purposes of comparison. Yet the thrust of one question is often very close to that of another, slightly different one; and many of the basic attitudes measured are unlikely to shift in the course of a year or two.

Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe

A Multidimensional Definition of Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe

Central and east Europeans define democracy in a way that combines liberal democratic and socio-economic elements such as equality, security and prosperity. Immediately following the demise of the Soviet bloc, roughly half in all countries of the region inclined toward each set of values. However, as publics became more secure in their new political freedoms and their countries began the transition to free-market economies, USIA surveys found that economic concerns rapidly began to eclipse political values in their thinking on democracy.

When asked in 1996-97 surveys to rank which element of democracy from a given list is most important *"for a society to be called a democracy,"* sizable majorities name economic benefits rather than political values (see figure at right, using 1997 data).[7]



Economic optimists -- those who are most sanguine about economic circumstances in their country as well as their own financial situation -- are more inclined to say political freedoms overshadow economic elements. Economic pessimists are inclined to stress economic equality and stability. Similarly, women, the elderly and the least educated, along with opponents of the free market, are more inclined to favor economic elements, particularly equality, in their definition of democracy. Those more likely to feel secure with the economic transition -- men, the young and the better educated -- and supporters of the market system are more inclined to prefer political freedoms.

Individual Components of Democracy

While these publics tend to name economic elements as most important, they do not reject the political rights associated with democracy. The tables on the opposite page show public response when respondents are asked whether each of the six items listed is essential *"for a society to be called a democracy."* In this question, respondents evaluate each element separately, often finding both political liberties and economic elements crucial for democracy.

Of the liberal democratic elements, only *"a system of justice that treats everyone equally"* is identified as essential *"for a society to be called a democracy"* by solid majorities across the region. This finding has been fairly consistent since the fall of the communist systems. Fewer (between a third and a half) in Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Romania, and

Equal Justice System	Poland	Hungary	Czech Rep.	Slovakia	Romania	Bulgaria
essential	70	73	79	73	65	82
important	22	21	16	21	28	14
not very important	3	3	3	3	4	--
not important	1	2	1	1	1	--

Multiparty elections	Poland	Hungary	Czech Rep.	Slovakia	Romania	Bulgaria
essential	30	41	45	32	37	46
important	45	28	35	36	47	35
not very important	14	17	12	20	11	8
not important	5	13	5	6	2	3

Freedom to Criticize Government	Poland	Hungary	Czech Rep.	Slovakia	Romania	Bulgaria
essential	39	43	29	24	36	51
important	40	32	36	36	40	33
not very important	14	17	24	27	18	8
not important	2	7	9	9	4	2

Economic Prosperity	Poland	Hungary	Czech Rep.	Slovakia	Romania	Bulgaria
essential	75	78	70	74	65	75
important	19	19	23	20	30	19
not very important	2	2	3	2	3	1
not important	1	--	1	--	1	1

Basic Needs Guaranteed	Poland	Hungary	Czech Rep.	Slovakia	Romania	Bulgaria
essential	64	77	59	69	55	68
important	27	19	30	24	36	25
not very important	3	3	7	4	6	3
not important	2	1	2	--	1	1

Economic Equality	Poland	Hungary	Czech Rep.	Slovakia	Romania	Bulgaria
essential	40	51	39	49	36	44
important	38	34	34	35	44	32
not very important	11	10	15	10	11	12
not important	5	5	8	3	7	6

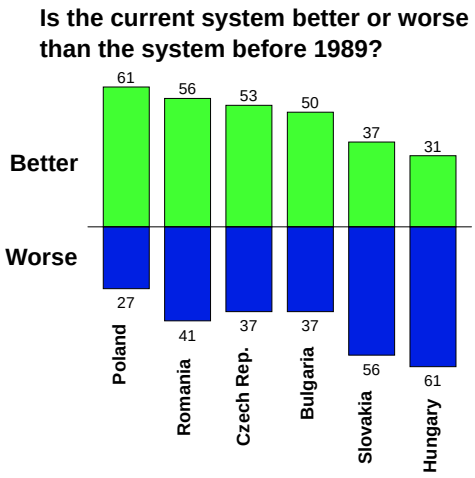
Bulgaria consider *"at least two strong political parties competing in elections"* and the *"freedom to criticize the government"* essential for a society to be called a democracy.

Among the economic elements, majorities of two-thirds or more in most of central-eastern Europe say that *"economic prosperity in the country"* is essential for a society to be called a democracy. This finding highlights the degree to which these publics are likely to evaluate democracy according to economic performance. Slightly smaller majorities say that *"a government that guarantees basic economic needs for all citizens"* is essential. In addition, between 36 and 51 percent say that *"a government that guarantees economic equality among its citizens"* is essential for a society to be called a democracy.

Evaluations of Current Political System

USIA data from the early 1990s through 1997 show that while many central and east Europeans see a clear improvement in their political system, others -- in some cases, as many or more -- think the current political system is worse than the system before 1989.

The figure at the right (1997 data) shows that more in Poland, Romania, the Czech Republic, and Bulgaria evaluate the current political system as better than the previous one, although significant percentages say it is worse. Slovaks and Hungarians are more likely to say the current system is worse than the previous.[8]



Throughout central and eastern Europe, those who have gained or expect to gain from greater openness in the economic and political systems are most positive about the new political order. Those who are less likely to prosper are more inclined to long for the security of the former regime and evaluate the current system as worse than the previous one. In addition, the better-educated and those who rate the country's economy as "good" and are optimistic about the future are also more likely to evaluate the current system as better than the previous, while the least educated and those most negative about the economy and their own financial situation -- those who have gained the least or lost out in the changes -- are more inclined to be critical of the current political system.

Those under 30 are slightly more likely to say that the current political system is better than the former one.

Evaluation of Economic Conditions Has an Impact

Publics were not always prepared for the degree of economic hardship that has, for many, accompanied the transition to markets and democracy. Their inevitable disillusionment appears to contribute in some cases to their relatively modest support for the current system.

USIA survey findings have shown that majorities in most central and east European countries -- except for Poland -- consider the current economic situation worse than the previous situation. Support for a Western-style free market economy is modest across the region. Half at most in each country think a free market is right for them, while a quarter to a half think it is wrong.

Support for New Institutions

Governments in central and eastern Europe have tended to enjoy the support of their publics during brief "honeymoon periods" following elections. Like publics in longer-established democracies, central and east Europeans have sometimes turned governments out of office when those in power failed to deliver expected improvement. In some cases (Poland, Hungary and Bulgaria), this pattern led to the election of governments whose members were active in the former communist regimes. More recently, some of these "leftist" governments (e.g., in Bulgaria and Poland) have been challenged by new and renewed political forces.

Publics in central and eastern Europe were initially highly supportive of their new institutions following the fall of the communist regimes. For example, in 1990, majorities in Poland (63%), Czechoslovakia (86%) and Romania (78%) had confidence in their national governments (47% in Hungary had confidence). Seven years into the transition, however, support has decreased considerably.[9]

Confidence in National Government **(1997)**	**Poland**	**Hungary**	**Czech Rep.**	**Slovakia**	**Romania**	**Bulgaria**
great deal	3	7	5	6	7	21
fair amount	25	36	27	20	31	32
not very much	54	27	50	48	45	30
none at all	13	28	18	25	17	15

Confidence in the justice system is very important in legitimizing regimes, particularly as most central and east Europeans' consistently rate an equal system of justice (along with economic prosperity) as essential to a democracy. Confidence in the courts and police varies somewhat across the region, but has remained fairly stable within countries over the last few years.

Confidence in the Police	**Poland**	**Hungary**	**Czech Rep.**	**Slovakia**	**Romania**	**Bulgaria**
great deal	9	10	2	5	18	16
fair amount	42	39	27	29	35	35
not very much	35	33	51	47	35	33
none at all	12	18	20	18	11	14

Confidence in the Courts **(1997)**	**Poland**	**Hungary**	**Czech Rep.**	**Slovakia**	**Romania**	**Bulgaria**
great deal	7	13	2	5	14	6
fair amount	37	37	20	33	32	19
not very much	38	28	51	44	39	43
none at all	13	16	25	15	13	25

Civic Culture

Public interest in politics is fairly low across the region. Only in Slovakia do a majority (57%) claim to have at least "a fair amount" of interest in political affairs, with clear majorities in the other five countries expressing little or no interest. Most strikingly, eight in ten Romanians claim to have "not much" or no interest in politics. In all countries except Romania, interest in politics tends to increase steadily with both education and age, although there is a noticeable drop off above age 65. In addition, men in each country tend to claim much more political interest.

Publics in central and eastern Europe tend to divide over the role of the citizen in political life. In 1996, Czechs (65%), Poles (59%) and Slovaks (56%) are more likely to say *"citizens' involvement in political life is an integral part of democratic solutions to political problems,"* though significant minorities disagree. The opposite view — *"it's best to leave politics to elected officials"* — prevails in Hungary (54%) and Romania (54%) and the public is closely divided in Bulgaria (47% vs. 44%).

Trust in one's fellow citizens is a hallmark of a democratic civic culture. In five of the countries, about eight in ten say that "you cannot be too careful" in trusting other people. There is a more even split in Bulgaria, where four in ten (41%) believe that "most people can be trusted." In each country, men and the better-educated are more likely to hold a benign view of others, with no pattern of differences among the age groups.

Challenges for Democracy

While majorities across the region agree with the statement, *"Whatever the problems that democracy brings, it's the best system of government for us,"* various political, economic and social problems affect public regard for democracy. Political corruption and economic decline, for example, pose tremendous challenges to new regimes aspiring to institutional reform. Other issues, such as longstanding ethnic tensions and independent-minded media, challenge the regimes' dedication to political freedoms. These problems can also fuel dissatisfaction within the public.

Crime and Corruption: Publics in most central and east European countries are closely divided on whether political corruption is worse now than under communism. Poles and Bulgarians are more likely to agree that the level of corruption is no worse now than before. Elsewhere, though, the pattern is reversed, with more *disagreeing* with this statement.

"Political corruption is not any worse now than under communism."

August - October 1997	Agree	Disagree
Bulgaria	46%	39%
Czech Republic	38	56
Hungary	43	46
Poland	52	32
Romania	46	50
Slovakia	32	59

Concern about organized crime is widespread in the region. Nearly eight in ten in each country surveyed believe that organized crime has "a very big" or "a rather big" influence over their country's affairs. Relatively few say that it has "a rather small" influence or "none at all." Except in Poland and Bulgaria, the belief that organized crime is very influential appears linked to a more general concern about corruption.

"How much influence would you say organized crime/Mafia has over [our] affairs?"

August - October 1997	Big	Small
Bulgaria	79%	7%
Czech Republic	74	21
Hungary	78	16
Poland	72	20
Romania	80	15
Slovakia	78	17

Other Issues -- Ethnic Tensions and Media Freedom: USIA surveys conducted in 1995 reveal that central and east Europeans are generally no more likely than some west Europeans to express prejudice against minorities living in their countries. However, while east and west Europeans voice similar levels of dislike for the minority groups in their countries, these feelings tend to find more overt expression among east than west Europeans.

Progress toward media freedom has been uneven across the region. In countries where the media are restricted, governments make use of powerful state-run television networks and severely limit the activity of fledgling independent media. This has added impact because, as USIA surveys have shown, publics across central and eastern Europe tend to rely most on television for information about events in their countries. When publics are asked about the media climate in their country, generally the young, urban, and better-educated are particularly critical of the media, and are most likely to perceive bias in news reporting.

Democracy in Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia Hercegovina

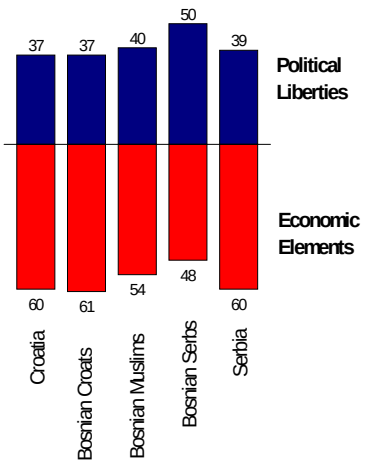
The previous section looked at public perceptions of democracy in countries which, to differing degrees, have been in a democratic transition since the end of the cold war. This section briefly outlines attitudes toward democracy in three countries where democratization has been overshadowed by the turbulent break-up of the former Yugoslavia: Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia Hercegovina.

Ethnic Divisions Present Obstacle for Establishment of Democratic Values

Ethnic animosities still run strong in these former Yugoslav countries. Unresolved situations in Eastern Slavonia and in Kosovo present challenges to the establishment of democracy in Croatia and Serbia, respectively. But war is the most extreme manifestation of the destructive power of ethnic tensions in this region. The idea of a multiethnic Bosnia continues to be opposed by nearly all Bosnian Serbs and most Bosnian Croats. Both remain convinced that the three ethnic groups can no longer live together because the war has done too much damage. Bosnian Muslims, on the other hand, support a multiethnic state and continue to believe the three ethnic groups can live peacefully together again in the country.

Democracy Viewed as Both Political Freedom and Economic Security

Like other central and east Europeans, majorities in Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia Hercegovina view democracy as having both a political liberties component -- including multiparty elections, a system of justice that treats everyone equally and the freedom to criticize the government -- and an economic security component -- including economic prosperity, a government that guarantees economic equality among its citizens and one that guarantees that citizens' basic economic needs are met (see figure, based on 1997 data). When asked specifically which element is most important for a society to be considered a democracy, publics in Serbia and Croatia tend to rank economic elements as most important. In Bosnia, Bosnian Croats rank economic elements as most important as do a slim majority of Bosnian Muslims. Bosnian Serbs are closely divided.



Selective Confidence in Government Institutions

These publics tend to be quite selective as to which government institutions they support, with confidence in national governments tending to be the most variable. Croats tend to voice confidence in their national government and Bosnian Muslims express confidence in the central government, the Federation Parliament and the collective presidency of Bosnia. By contrast,

Bosnian Croats and Serbs, and Serbs in Serbia, lack confidence in their national governments,[10] although a majority of Bosnian Serbs express confidence in the Bosnian Serb Parliament. Local governments tend to inspire more confidence, with majorities among all three ethnic groups in Bosnia having confidence in their local government.

Confidence in Army, Police and Courts

Except among Bosnian Croats, the armed forces elicit more confidence than any other national institution among these publics. Nine in ten Croats express confidence in the Croatian Army. Nine in ten Bosnian Serbs express confidence in the Bosnian Serb Army and nearly as many Bosnian Muslims express confidence in the Muslim-Croat Federation Army. However, only one in ten Bosnian Croats expresses confidence in the Federation Army. Among Serbs in Serbia, confidence in the army is at half, but still higher than most other national institutions. Confidence in the police remains solid in Croatia and among some Bosnians (Muslims in particular). Half or more, except among Bosnian Muslims and Croats in Croatia lack confidence in the court system.

Democracy in Turkey

Turkey has -- for half a century -- straddled more explosive fault lines than perhaps any other democratic nation and therefore deserves a special note. Established in the 1920s as a secular state by charismatic leader Kemal Ataturk, modern Turkey still walks several tightropes: *geographically*, it is poised between Europe and Asia; *strategically*, it is a member of NATO but not integrated into other European organizations such as the EU; *culturally*, its population is largely Muslim, but the modern republic is founded on secularist principles.

Tension between the secular state and Islamist elements in Turkey was highlighted in recent years in the rise to power of Refah (Welfare) Party leader Necmettin Erbakan in 1996 in coalition with the True Path party. Erbakan's efforts to elevate Islamic values in politics and to strengthen ties with some Islamist states of the Middle East drew heavy criticism from opponents. Under pressure from the Turkish military -- which considers itself the protector of the secular tenets of Kemalism -- Erbakan resigned in 1997. Currently, in the name of protecting Turkish secularism, federal prosecutors are working to ban the Party (causing some observers to question whether such a move is itself democratic).

Despite the gains of Refah over the past few years, a 1997 USIA survey shows that roughly a quarter of the Turkish public can be characterized as either moderate or staunch *Islamists*, with only one in ten expressing staunch Islamist views. The majority of the public remains either moderately or strongly *secularist* in outlook (76%). While some wish to promote religious values -- having Islamic values play a larger role in society (78%) and increasing religious education in schools (63%) -- these views tend to reflect social conservatism rather than a move toward political Islam. Just a quarter of the public think that "Turkey should be administered according to Shariat laws," and fewer still (14%) favor a role for religious organizations in government.

Although political and religious cleavages visibly strain Turkish democracy, beneath the surface there is a surprising degree of consensus on some core democratic tenets. The overwhelming

Most Important Element in a Democracy (in %; 1997)

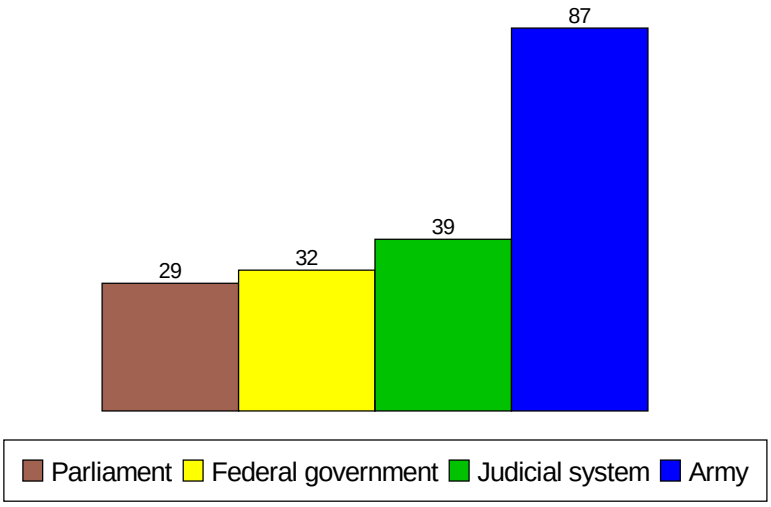
System of justice that treats everyone equally	35
Economic equality among all citizens	15
Government that guarantees basic economic needs are met	13
Economic prosperity in the country	11
Freedom to criticize the government	6
Multiparty system	5

majority of Turks (92%) think that their country should pursue democratic principles,[11] and three-quarters (73%) also believe that a multiparty system is better than a one-party system. Participatory aspects of democracy also appeal to many Turks: eight in ten feel that citizens have a duty to do something about policies with which they disagree.

Yet, as with many world publics, a gap remains between this widespread support for certain democratic ideals and confidence in Turkey's current political system. Two-thirds say that most people "have no say in what the government does" and that the current political system does not protect citizens' rights. In addition, confidence in government is low. In 1997, as many do *not* believe that "in general, one can rely on the government to do what's right" as agree with this view (48% to 46%).[12]

Majorities of Turks *lack* confidence in the federal government (69%), parliament (67%) and judiciary (56%). (Half doubt that the courts guarantee everyone a fair trial regardless of social position.) However, slightly more have than lack confidence in *local* government (50% to 45%). The Army is the most trusted institution in Turkey (nine in ten voice confidence), and as many trust it to "safeguard the interests of the Turkish people." Seven in ten also express confidence in mosques and in the police.

Turks Expressing Confidence in Various Public Institutions (in %)



The upshot remains, however, that fully 88 percent agree with the statement "I feel very critical of our political system," and seven in ten say that politics "is dirty and too closely tied to or influenced by criminals."

Democracy in Russia, Ukraine, and the Commonwealth of Independent States

Just as the end of the Soviet empire in 1989 brought democratic change in central and eastern Europe, the collapse of the Soviet Union itself since 1991 has ushered in a nearly unprecedented transformation of governance in the former USSR. Pluralism and democracy, if limited and inchoate, have at least taken root in some of the former Soviet republics. Though much challenged, freedom has proven resilient in many of the successor states. The transition is incomplete, however, and democracy's destiny not assured.

As in the countries freed from Soviet thrall, the idea of democracy most current in the former USSR is something akin to "social democracy" in Western terms. Political rights and freedoms are not ignored, as the graphs on the following page show. Large majorities recognize the importance of a free press, the ability to criticize their government openly, freedom of religion, and honest elections. Since 1989 -- when the first relatively free elections in over 70 years were permitted in the then-USSR -- the Russian people and other former Soviet citizens have demonstrated their dedication to these principles of democracy in action.

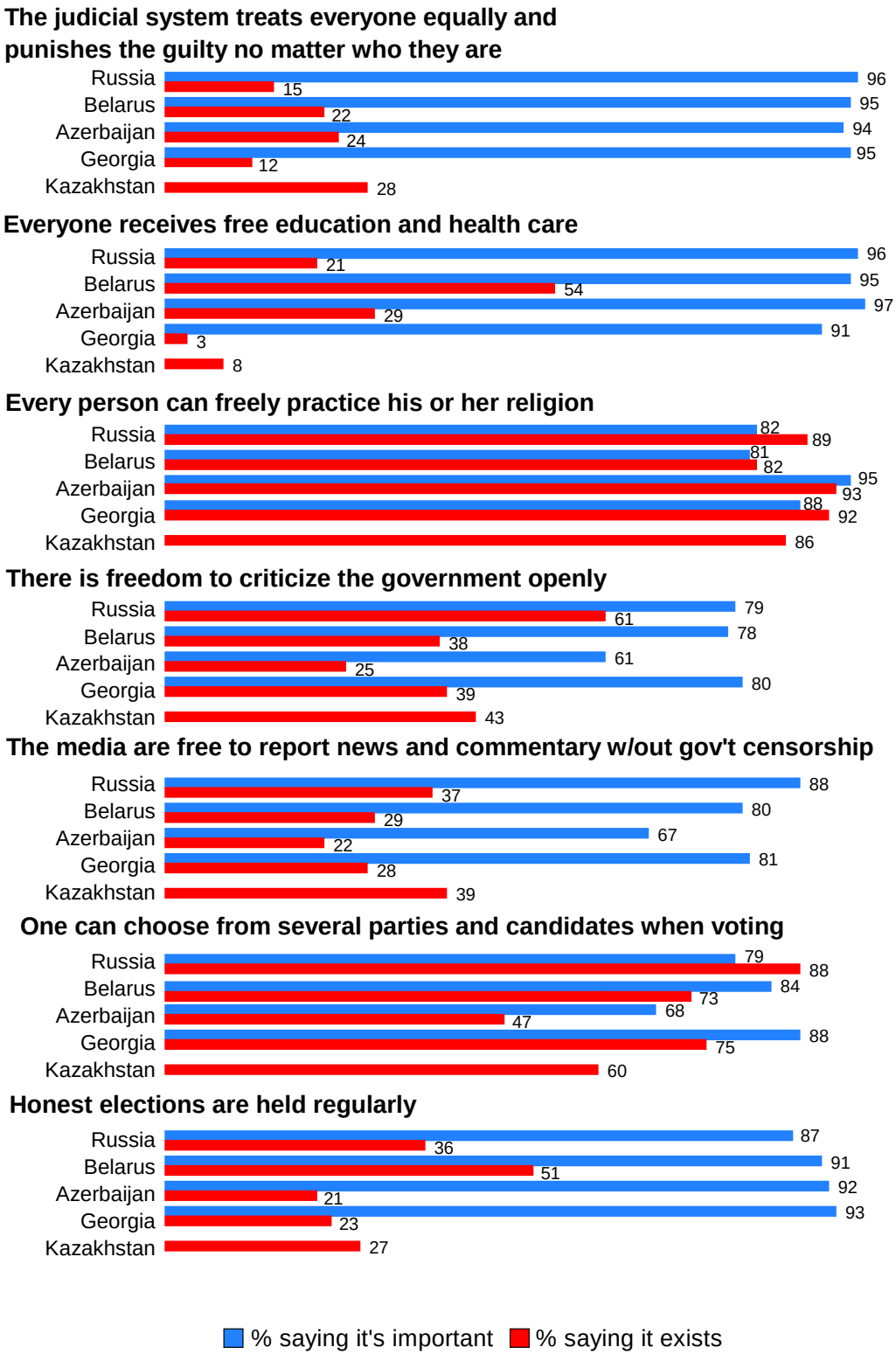
Nonetheless, social well-being and legal equality top the list of most-desired democratic features. Free education and health care for all get a nod of approval from virtually all, as does the critical foundation of the rule of law that "all are treated equally by the judicial system" and "the guilty are punished no matter who they are."

The Roots of Disillusionment

Throughout the region, there is a considerable gap between what publics say they want in a democracy and what exists in their own countries. This is evident most graphically in the full-page figure on the facing page.

The most striking contrast is that between the virtually unanimous hunger for an equitable system of justice and the lack thereof -- with no more than 12-28 percent of these publics affirming that such a court system exists in their country. In Russia and Ukraine -- and to a lesser extent in Georgia -- publics in late 1996 say that they do not feel much progress at all has been made in their respective countries since 1991 toward achieving "the rule of law." Six in ten in the two Slavic lands say *no* progress whatever has occurred. (See table on p. 16)

Former USSR - Importance and Existence of Various Democratic Practices



Progress Toward the Rule of Law

	Russia	*Ukraine*	*Georgia*
A great deal	1%	2%	4%
A fair amount	8	6	30
Subtotal	**9**	**8**	**34**
Not very much	22	27	32
None at all	61	60	21
Subtotal	**83**	**87**	**53**
DK/NA	8	7	13

The one aspect of democracy which appears both universally appreciated and considered to be in place is the freedom to practice one's own religion. The ability to choose among several candidates and parties at elections is also thought to exist in many former Soviet republics, but not in Azerbaijan.

For the rest, the record is more than spotty. In every country citizens recognize that a multiparty system is not synonymous with "honest elections." Only in Lukashenko's Belarus do even half the public feel that they vote in fair elections. Russia stands out in one regard: six in ten there believe that they enjoy the freedom to criticize their government openly, far more than in any other nation surveyed in this region.

Taking the Temperature of Democracy

How do the citizens of these erstwhile Soviet republics view their systems overall? With a cool eye, for the most part. Asked if they think theirs is a democratic country, more Georgians say "no" than say "yes" (45%-38%). When queried how they would describe their system of government, as many Armenians respond "authoritarianism" or "oligarchy" as say "democracy" (16% each), but more characterize it as a system of "presidential power" (23%).

When given the choice between a government "where power is dispersed among the executive, legislative, and judicial branches" (the classic American separation of powers) and one with "a strong authoritarian leader," Belarusians are almost as likely to prefer the strongman as a system of checks and balances (39% vs. 45%). Georgians and Kazakhstanis, though, are *more* likely to favor an authoritarian leader (53-54%, as opposed to 31-32% supporting separation of powers).

Only half in Russia say that protecting their freedoms is important enough to lead them to fight a dictatorship; a third say that "restoring order is so important" that they would support a dictator.

Similarly, a majority in Kazakhstan prefer to live "in a society with strict order, even if it requires limiting freedom of speech." (A third feel this way strongly.)

A vote for the bad old days? Not really. Change, transformation, chaos have produced a wariness that transcends politics; the yearning here is for order and stability more than for yielding on the democracy which they otherwise prize. Russia has gone through several dramatic political crises in the past six years. Georgia went through a debilitating civil war immediately after gaining independence. Belarus tottered on the brink of an internal breakdown in the past several months, with a major confrontation between the legislature and the president. Kazakhstan, while on the surface more stable, still faces ethnic and other tensions.

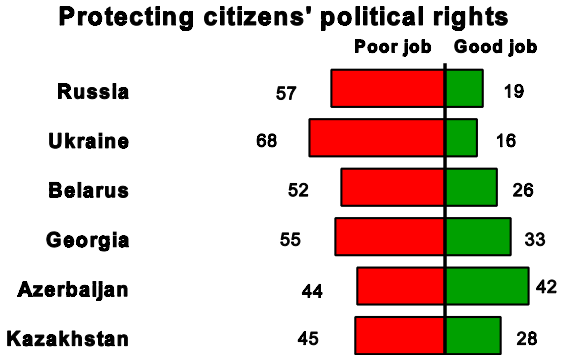
Where the Dangers Lie

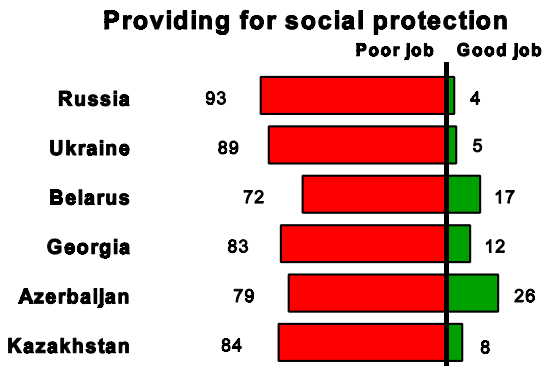
Apathy, skepticism, and distrust are three of the greatest threats to post-Soviet nascent democracies. Voters do not feel empowered and do not believe their interests are being well-served by current regimes. For example, few in any of these nations feel that "voting gives persons like me some say" in how the government runs the country. In Ukraine, two-thirds *disagree* with this proposition, as do a majority in Armenia (56%) and half in Russia. More Georgians and Belarusians feel empowered by voting than do not (53% to 27% and 53% to 38% respectively). Azerbaijanis, however, divide on the issue (41% to 39%).

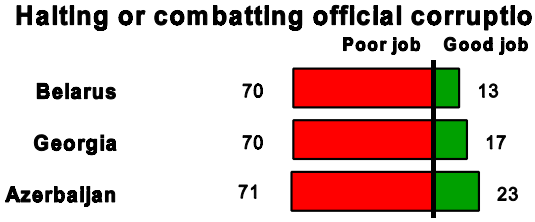
In Kazakhstan, six in ten say that public officials do *not* care "what people like me think;" three in ten feel that they do. In Russia fully 84 percent feel that officials are indifferent to the public's opinions.

On task after task, meanwhile, these publics give failing or very low marks to their regimes:

How Well is the Government Performing Various Tasks?

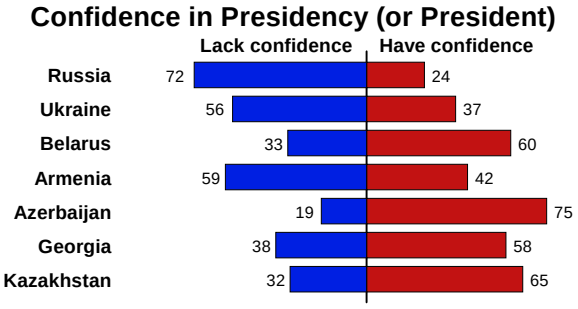


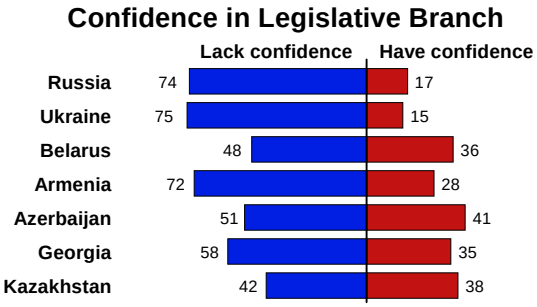


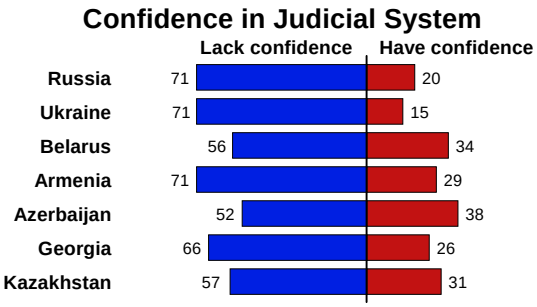


In Russia, three-quarters in 1994-96 said that "halting official corruption" was a *very important* task for the country. In a possibly related finding, three-fourths also say that the Russian state is unable to maintain law and order within its bounds.

On security-related tasks which relate to democracy -- such as dealing with Crimea in Ukraine or Abkhazia and South Ossetia in Georgia -- the governments involved receive poor or very poor ratings from half or more of their citizenry. But the greatest of these thorny issues, Chechnya, is mostly out of Russia's side now, and people in both Armenia and Azerbaijan are more or less content with the job their respective leaders are doing with respect to Nagorno-Karabakh.







Little Confidence in Public Institutions

Confidence in most public institutions and political figures is low throughout the CIS. This is hardly surprising, given a world-wide trend of similar direction.

The few exceptions to this rule -- the office of the president in Azerbaijan, Belarus, and Georgia and President Nazarbaev in Kazakhstan -- are worth examining. Does this reflect a penchant for strongman rule? It might, given the situation in Azerbaijan, Belarus, and Kazakhstan. Is it more a judgment on the competence or good will of the incumbents? That is possible. It's probable, however, that bruised feelings of nationalism or patriotic sentiments also play a role here: the head of state is vested with more confidence in these three countries because he is seen as defending the nation's interests more fully than other branches of government.

What stands out is the low ranking of virtually all branches of government in Russia, Ukraine, and Armenia. The irony here is that many outsiders would consider these three as among the most promising democracies in the region -- testimony, perhaps, to their critically thinking publics.

Conclusion

The picture may seem grim to some, but it is also a fact that attitudes about democracy in the former Soviet Union -- on confidence in public institutions, government performance, and so on -- closely resemble those in Western democracies like the United States. Whether or not time alone is the remedy for these young democracies' ills is an open question. But there is reason for some optimism in the results of USIA polls which show widespread acceptance of and belief in the values upon which a sound democracy is based.

Democracy in Africa

Until relatively lately there has been a dearth of public opinion data on popular views of democracy in Sub-Saharan Africa. In 1996-97, however, USIA commissioned surveys in -- or acquired data about -- Ethiopia, Angola, Nigeria, Kenya, Zimbabwe, and South Africa. These polls probe the publics' attitudes toward not only democracy and the democratic process but also the role of civic education in these nations.

Some of the countries discussed here appear to be in transition from less democratic to more democratic states; others are mired in the authoritarian ways of the past. Ethiopia held nationwide elections in May 1995 (boycotted by most opposition parties) which, for good or ill, left power in the hands of the ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front. Kenya's last general election, in December 1992, was viewed by most observers as seriously flawed. Leaders in both Kenya and Zimbabwe are well-entrenched and without effective political opposition. Nigeria has long been saddled with rule by military strongmen and rampant corruption. Angola has suffered through more than two decades of civil war but may have put an end to the chaos in recent years. South Africa has moved from democracy's pariah to a promising new order.

Democracy's Appeal Limited by Knowledge and Poverty

What emerges from all polling is a fairly widespread desire for democracy in the abstract and more tenuous support and understanding in fact. For example, majorities (generally overwhelming) in Nigeria, Kenya, Zimbabwe, and South Africa say that nearly all political values associated with Western-style democracy are "important" or "very important." The publics show a high regard for honest elections, the protection of minority group rights, due process of law, a fair judiciary, and freedom of the press.

Tempering the enthusiasm for democratic values, however, is the hardscrabble life endured by most of these publics. In Ethiopia, when asked to prioritize (from a list) several "possible goals for our country," half choose "major economic reforms." "Democratic principles" ties for (a distant) third, along with "guidance by religious values," at only nine percent. This in a nation where a sizable majority (61%) say that the establishment of democracy in their country is a fairly or very good thing (and three-fourths of the better-educated express this view).

Similarly, in Angola -- where the vast majority of better-educated people prefer "a government that allows you to make choices" (85%) over one that "makes most of the decisions for you" (3%), economic tasks are placed much higher on the government "to do" list than forging democracy. Better-educated Angolans opt first for "providing people with a chance to get ahead economically" (33%) and for "providing an opportunity for people to have an adequate standard of living" (28%). Few choose "guaranteeing individual political rights within the country" or "safeguarding the freedom of the press" (2% each).

In four other African nations -- Kenya, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, and South Africa -- publics' understanding of democracy, by their own admission, is imperfect at best. Minorities in each claim to have "a good understanding of how democracy is supposed to work" in their own country. That proportion is lowest in Zimbabwe (21%), somewhat higher in South Africa (34%), Kenya (38%), and Nigeria (43%). In South Africa, blacks and whites are near reverse mirror-images in their views: whereas 27 percent of blacks but 52 percent of whites say they have a good understanding of democracy, 58 percent of blacks and 39 percent of whites feel that they "do not fully understand how democracy is supposed to work." In the other three countries, not surprisingly, self-professed understanding tends to rise with the level of education.

In Kenya, the public was asked questions to see how democracy is faring. Asked how well various statements describe their own country, Kenyans affirm that "one can choose from several parties and candidates when voting" (65%) but not that: "there is freedom to openly criticize the government"; "the judicial system punishes fairly"; "elections for public office are fair and honest"; and that "the media are free to report the news without government censorship." In fact, roughly two-thirds say that none of the last four statements describe Kenya well. And few (20%) think that "the government is free of corruption"; four in five reject the statement.

Civic Education a Key to the Future

It may bode well for democratic prospects in Kenya and Nigeria that half or more in each say that they are interested in politics (though large minorities lack interest) and that about the same proportions participate in some form of community service. Less propitious are the half in South Africa (53%) and majority in Zimbabwe (68%) who express little or no interest in politics, and the third or fewer who engage in typical civic activities there.

Yet across the board there is support for civic education, even in Zimbabwe. Nearly all say it is important that citizens be educated in democracy and good citizenship (i.e., the rights and obligations of a good citizen). Public schools (below college-level) are the choice of most in each country for providing such education; families take the second spot, far behind.

Threats to Democracy

The lack of trust in their own leaders and fellow citizens is a major obstacle in the way of further democratization in most of these African nations. Majorities in Kenya (83%), Nigeria (85%), South Africa (64%), and Zimbabwe (63%) believe that the majority of public officials are corrupt. (Despite this, two-thirds of Nigerians still feel that their government is "sincere in its promise to quickly return the country to civilian rule.") Nearly as many in each country say the same about the majority of business leaders. In Zimbabwe, Kenya, and South Africa, furthermore, the requisite trust in one's fellow citizens is, if not absent, in short supply. About half in each say that "you can trust your neighbors and the people you work with to do what is right most of the time." Nearly as many (44-47%) feel the opposite.

But perhaps the greatest threats to democracy throughout the continent are tribalism and ethnic conflict, forces which have torn asunder polities in such nations as Rwanda, Burundi, and Zaire. In USIA polls, this issue has not often surfaced -- the countries surveyed are somewhat atypical in this regard. But in one poll, that of better-educated Angolans, it was at least touched upon, and it appears not to be a major concern. Asked what is the single most important problem facing Angola today, enough volunteered "conflict" or "war" (22%) to put it in second place, after "unemployment" or the bad economic situation (32%). But overall, the educated public is very optimistic that "Angolans can live peacefully together again," that the years of fighting have not done "too much damage" for reconciliation to succeed (86% agree, only 6% disagree).

Along the same lines, these Angolans place "assurance of ethnic and minority rights within the country" far down the list of individual rights the government might protect -- named by three percent, as compared to open, fair elections and a judicial system punishing all equally, each cited by a quarter or more.

Postscript

Nigeria's current military leader, General Abacha, has signaled (November 1997) that he will release some political activists under detention in his country. Four years after his ascension to power, having annulled the 1993 elections won by today's best-known political prisoner, the general appears intent on winning over the public in preparation for promised presidential elections in October 1998. The announced aim of the elections is to place Nigeria under civilian rule.

In Kenya, national elections have just returned President Daniel Arap Moi to office for another five-year term, amid charges of manipulation and voter fraud. Last year, before the elections, an outbreak of violence in areas where political opposition to Moi's regime was strong led conspiracy theorists to accuse the government of foul play. Some claim it is the opposition itself which is responsible for a wave of arson, while still others blame Islamic fundamentalists.

Whether any elections can or will fundamentally change the situation of democracy in these nations remains a moot point. When Cameroon recently held presidential elections, its 15-year-tenured ruler Paul Biya won seven more years in office, taking 93 percent of a vote most observers considered rigged. Similar outcomes would not be a surprise elsewhere in the region.

Democracy in South Asia

Pakistan

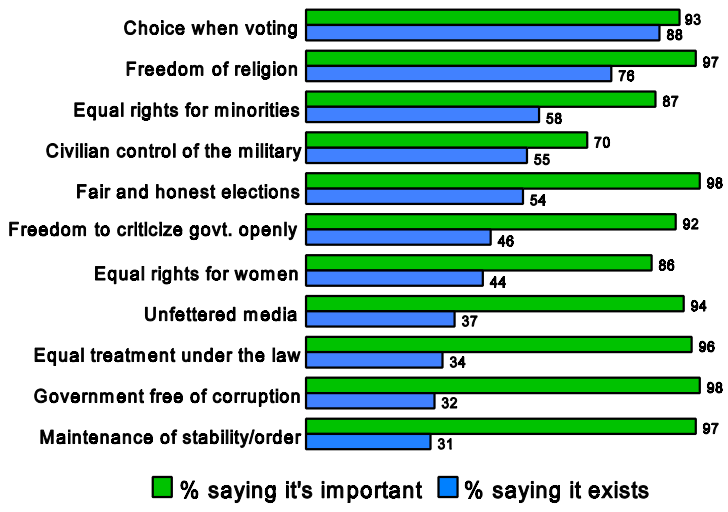
Pakistan is an Islamic ideological state which has for nine years been governed by a series of elected governments. Most of the first 40 of its 50 years were spent under military dominance. Pakistanis are now broadly dissatisfied with the way democratic governance is working in their country, according to the first USIA-sponsored survey taken in that country in nearly a decade. Yet they remain committed to the basic principles of democracy -- at least on paper. But poll findings suggest that given the ongoing conditions of civil unrest, perceptions of wide corruption in government, and a poor economy, many Pakistanis may be willing to trade democracy for greater economic and personal security.

The Distance Between Ideals and Practice

As elsewhere around the globe, majorities of urban Pakistanis affirm the great importance of many democratic values, including honest elections, freedom of religion, an independent judiciary, multiparty elections, freedom of the press, and the freedom to criticize the government openly. Smaller majorities of urban residents place a high value on equality for women and minority rights.

But also as with other nations, the ideals often fall short -- in some cases *far* short -- of practice. In assessing how descriptive these conditions are of their country, Pakistanis are most likely to say that Pakistan enjoys multiparty elections, religious freedom, the protection of minority rights, and -- by a slim margin -- honest elections. Lacking, in the view of a majority, are an impartial judiciary (62% say it does not effectively exist), freedom of the press (56%), and especially a government free of corruption (64%) and able to maintain stability and order (67%). They divide on whether or not there is freedom to criticize the government openly. The graph below shows the discord between the democratic traits these Pakistanis rate as at least fairly important and the extent to which they believe those characteristics apply to their own country.

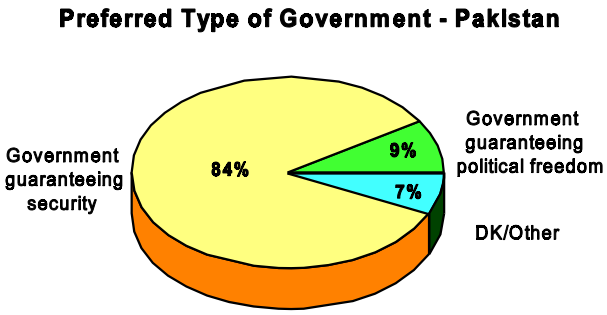
Pakistan Democracy Assessed



The bottom line: nine years into civilian government, half do *not* consider Pakistan a democratic state (about a quarter do). The naysayers have mixed views on whether their country will ever have a democracy "which functions as it should" -- more say it will than say it won't (55% to 45%). The better-educated tend to be more skeptical.

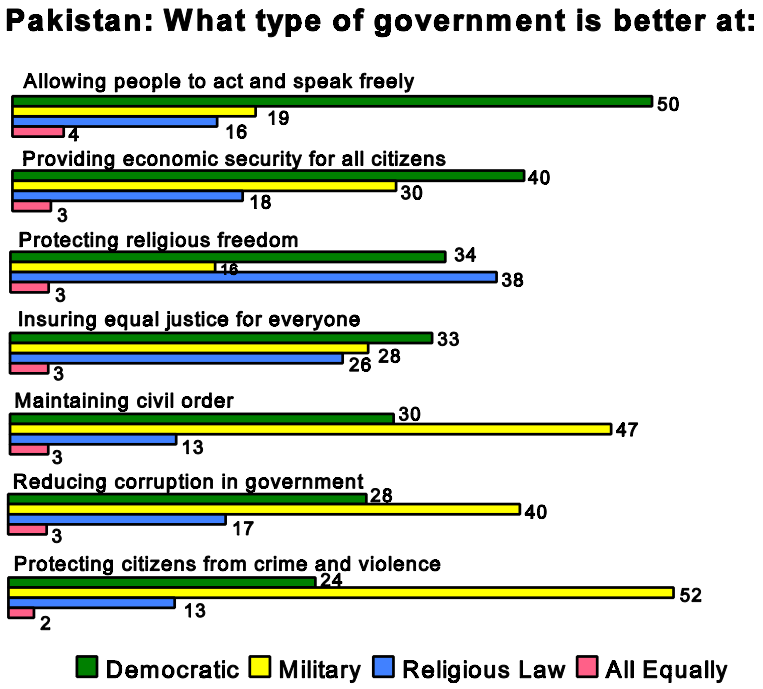
The reasons Pakistanis offered for why their country is not a democracy include the lack of democratic traditions and continuing "feudal" conditions (38%), lawlessness (21%), corruption (21%), the weak economy (17%), and government inefficiency and recent failures (14%).

Overall, a majority (56%) feel that citizens' basic rights are *not* well protected in the current political system. Given the nation's bleak economic situation, it is not unexpected -- but still sobering -- that the large majority would prefer a government which guarantees economic security to one which guarantees political freedom.



The Allures of Nondemocratic Systems

The nearly half century of military-dominated rule in Pakistan did not leave the populace overly eager for civilian leaders and Western-style democracy. Whereas about nine in ten express confidence in the country's military, significantly fewer voice confidence in the current civilian government. Only a narrow plurality (36%) prefer a democratic government to military rule (30%) or to a "religious" government (22%).



In a tripartite question, Pakistanis were asked "how to find solutions to political problems in a country" -- whether they felt that "citizens' involvement in political life is the best way to solve political problems," or that "it's best to leave politics to elected officials," or that such decisions are best left to the military (or other "traditional authorities"). As many say they want elected officials to solve political problems as say the citizenry should (30% to 28%), while 17 percent opt for the military. (One in ten volunteer that all three together should resolve problems, and a handful say none.)

Apathy Fuels the Dissatisfaction

Fewer than half (43%) profess at least some interest in political affairs (54% say they are "not very" or "not at all" interested). Half claim to have voted in nationwide elections earlier this year which brought a new prime minister (Nawaz Sherif) to office. Two-thirds say they are too busy to become involved in politics. Yet indifference does not explain everything: a slim majority (55%) also claim that any political actions they might engage in would have little or no effect.

Asked for a self-assessment of how well they understand the way democracy works in their country, Pakistanis divide evenly. As many say they do as say they do not have a good understanding of how it is supposed to work (42% to 41%), while a fifth are unsure.

Lacking a sense of empowerment and efficacy, Pakistanis are further alienated by the feeling that corruption is rampant throughout the power circles of their nation. Three-fourths say that the

majority of both public officials and business leaders are corrupt (half agree strongly with each proposition).

Where to Place Public Trust?

Pakistanis place more trust in the military than in the recently elected national government (86% to 65%). A smaller majority (61%) places at least a fair amount of confidence in "religious leaders" as well. Slightly more have confidence than lack it in national radio and television (53% to 41%), but local newspapers are viewed more skeptically (44% lack confidence, 43% express it). They are similarly divided on legal and judicial system: half voice little or no confidence, nearly as many profess at least a fair amount.

Lowest of all on the trust totem pole fall civil servants and the police. Six in ten lack confidence in government workers, eight in ten in the police -- a reflection of the widespread corruption reported.

India

India has been "the world's largest democracy" (in terms of population) since gaining its independence from Britain in 1947. In some respects, however, India remains a patchwork system which has not cohered into a smoothly functioning democracy. For example, the nation has a multiparty system which can splinter and lead to unstable coalition politics.[13]

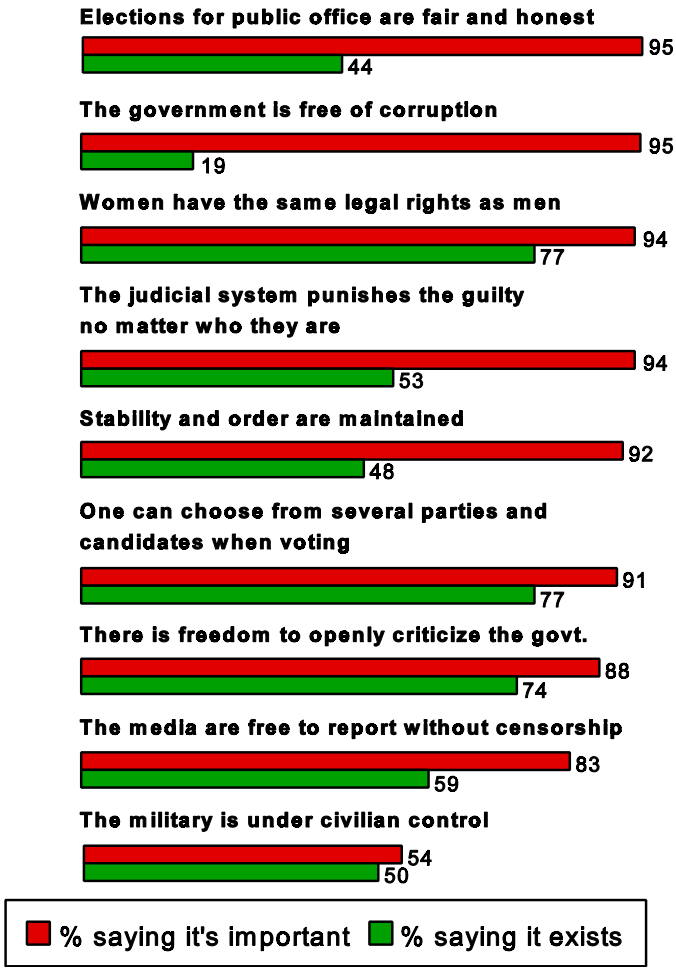
Nevertheless, by a narrow plurality Indians in the nation's four major cities say they are satisfied with the way their democracy is working at the national level (47% to 37%). A majority (58%) feel this way about democracy at the local level. Among those dissatisfied with the way democracy's working in the country as a whole, opinion divides evenly on whether or not India will ever have an "ideal democracy" (43% each for "yes" and "no").

About as many agree as disagree that "the basic rights of citizens are well protected by our political system" (45% to 41%). If asked to choose between a government which guarantees political freedoms but does not promise economic security and jobs for all and a government that guarantees jobs and economic security but restricts political freedoms, the majority of urban Indians come down on the side of economic security (60% to 21%). Some (11%) want to have it both ways.

The gap between what urban Indians want in a democracy and what they have in their own country is most striking with regard to impartial justice, honest elections, and a corruption-free government (see figure on next page). Fully 90 percent of major-city residents agree that women should have the same legal rights and obligations as men (three-quarters agree strongly). Seven in ten also support (half strongly) proposed legislation which would reserve a third of the

national parliament's seats for women. On a related issue, eight in ten feel that India will not have a true democracy until all vestiges of the traditional caste system have been eliminated.

Assessing Indian Democracy



Trust and Confidence

Two months before its fall, only half expressed confidence in the then current national government; nearly as many (44%) said they lacked confidence in it. Three-fourths (74%) agree that "the majority of public officials are corrupt" (half strongly agree). Two-thirds believe that the majority of business leaders are corrupt.

True, the overwhelming majority profess to have confidence in the military (88%), which has historically remained apart from politics, and in broadcast media (81%). The courts (legal/ judicial system), moreover, receive a vote of confidence from a sizable majority (60%) and the

civil service (ordinary government workers) from about half (53%). But as many lack as have confidence (45% to 44%) in other government officials, and twice as many voice little or no confidence in the police (65%) as say they have it (32%). Only a third express confidence in religious leaders.

On other attitudes which may affect democracy's prospects in India: Six in ten major city residents believe that "you can trust your neighbors and the people you work with to do what is right most of the time." Thirty-seven percent disagree. The overwhelming majority (88%) feel that it is *not* OK to break the law, even if certain that no one will catch you.

Political Involvement

More urban Indians say they are *not* interested in political matters than profess that they are (54% to 45%). Still, eighty percent claim to have voted in the last national election. Two-thirds say that "citizens' involvement in political life is a very important part of finding democratic solutions to political problems," while a quarter believe that "it's best to leave politics to elected officials."

Among other common political activities, a majority of city dwellers (61%) read about politics in the newspapers, but minorities (42-48%) either discuss politics with others or work with other people in their community to try to solve local problems. Fewer still (8-19%) spend any time working for a political party or particular candidate, attend political rallies or meetings, contact government officials/politicians, or try to convince friends to vote the way they do.

Contradictions abound in how these Indians view their own involvement in politics. Although a huge majority (86%) claim that "if a citizen is unhappy with the policies of the government, he/she has a duty to do something about it," and somewhat smaller majorities (61-62%) claim they are at least fairly likely to sign a petition or participate in a peaceful demonstration *in their local community* -- yet seven in ten say they are too busy to get involved in politics. And whereas four-fifths (79%) agree that "if people like me get together with their neighbors they can help in solving the country's problems," half say that if they did participate in local community political activities their actions would have little or no effect (a third feel it would have at least a fair amount of impact).

All in all, it is hardly surprising that only a fifth of urban Indians claim to have a good understanding of the way democracy works in their country, and half admit that they "do not fully understand" how democracy is supposed to work.

Democracy in East and Southeast Asia

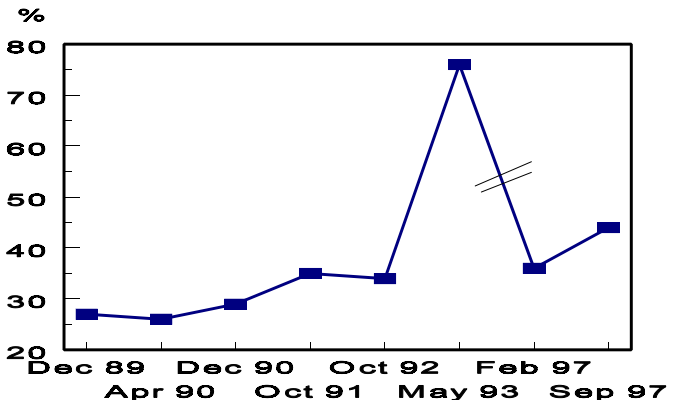
In South Korea, the Philippines, and Thailand, current and past USIA polling provides some key findings on the state of democracy. The picture is mixed at best. In the course of the past year, economic and political scandals and/or other woes have triggered discontent among broad segments of these Asian publics. The current crisis may be having an impact on people's views of democracy. The survey results reported below do *not* reflect the influence of recent developments.

The tradition of military or strong-man rule is about as marked in East Asia as in most of Africa and Latin America. Korean politics of the 1960s through the 1980s was highlighted by military coups and authoritarian military rule. Students in particular -- but others also -- have clashed frequently with police over government policy in the last decade. Yet today the country is evolving into a more pluralistic society. Political protests in 1987 led to the first truly democratic election in the nation's history. In presidential elections held on December 18, 1997, a long-time opposition activist won the three-man race, narrowly defeating the ruling party's candidate.

The Thai military has a long history of intervention in civilian politics -- with 18 coups or attempted coups since the installation of a constitutional monarchy in 1932. The Philippines were under the sway of Ferdinand Marcos for some 14 years (and now, after the Corazon Aquino interregnum, President Fidel Ramos may be trying to amend the Marcos-inspired constitutional limit and succeed himself).

Half (53%) of South Koreans are *dissatisfied* with "the way democracy works in Korea" (a sizable minority -- 44% -- profess satisfaction). This contrasts with the situation in Thailand and the Philippines: seven in ten in both (urban) Thailand (late 1995) and the Philippines (1996) said they were satisfied with the way democracy works in their own country.

Proportion of South Koreans Satisfied with the Way Democracy Works, 1989-97



Majorities (seven in ten) in the Philippines feel that elections at both the national and local levels are free and fair; four-fifths think that the country is being run for the benefit of all the people. A smaller but still distinct majority (59%) of urban Thais feel that their country is also being run for the benefit of all the people.

Public Confidence in Democracy's Institutions

Further evidence that the links between the governed and their leaders, which must be strong in a democracy, are not eroded in many parts of eastern Asia lies in public confidence in official institutions. In the Philippines, seven in ten or more say they have confidence in the nation's most important public institutions. The broadcast media (radio and TV) top the list, at over 90 percent each, with the press, local government, and the "national government" close behind (85-87%). Four in five express confidence in the armed forces, congress, civil service, and court system. On the lowest rung fall the police -- tarnished by corruption charges -- but at a far from anemic 69 percent.

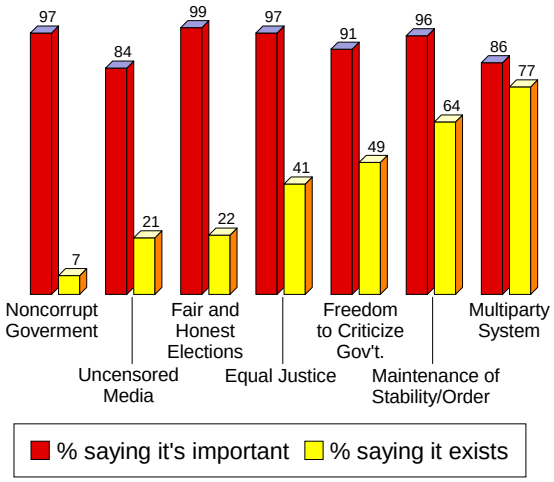
The picture is similar, if not as rosy, in Thailand. There, the armed forces barely top domestic TV in the urban public's confidence (88% to 84%) but are further ahead of the civilian leadership -- the National Assembly, or parliament (69%), and especially the "national government" and the civil service (both at 59%). The judicial system, however, comes close to the top -- at 80 percent. Lowest of all, but still with an urban majority confidence vote, is the police.

In South Korea over the past decade, virtually every public institution has seen its "ratings" drop. The only two exceptions are career military officers and judges, both of whose confidence rankings are higher today than seven years ago, though lower than in the mid-1980s. National politicians, bureaucrats, local police, and owners or managers of big businesses have all fallen, as have — though less dramatically — school teachers, newspaper reporters, and university professors.

Democracy's Doldrums

If one examines the health of democracy in the two nations whose publics proclaim themselves more or less satisfied with how their systems are working, some paradoxes are revealed. Urban Thais view many conditions as "important" or "very important" elements of a democratic system. Yet majorities find most of these conditions absent in their own country. Of the various aspects given, three rank above the rest: fair and honest elections, a government free of corruption, and a judicial system that punishes the guilty no matter who they are. All three were called "very important" by 80-83 percent of the people, and at least somewhat important by higher proportions (see chart opposite). "Stability and order are maintained" and "freedom to criticize the government openly" came in with smaller majorities.

Importance and Existence of Democratic Practices in Thailand



However, urban Thais are unwilling to vouchsafe the judgment that *any of the key elements* of a working democracy *actually exists in Thailand* today. Leaving aside the issue of corruption, the lowest marks assigned by these Thais -- what they most feel the lack of -- went to "fair and honest elections" and "media free to report news without censorship," followed by an equitable system of justice and freedom to criticize the government.

While Thais thus see the shortcomings in their own democracy, fully two-thirds of the urban population would *not* agree to give up the political freedoms they now have, even if the country's problems could be solved by a nondemocratic leader's seizing power. A third say they would be willing to make this hypothetical trade.

And what of the equally "satisfied" Filipinos? Despite the fairly widespread approval of the nation's political system, fully two-fifths would be willing to "give up many of the political freedoms we now have" should a leader take power and be able "to solve the nation's problems" by ruling undemocratically. Only half say they would be *unwilling* to cede their freedoms.

Whereas the vast majority of the Filipino public (89%) think that "people like themselves" can have some effect on decisions made by local and national governments at least some of the time, most urban Thais (78%) feel that they have little or no impact on government decisionmaking at the local or national level.

Differing views of democracy may explain some of these apparent contradictions. Despite a superficial identification with Western-style governments, the Thai concept of democracy seems more centered on social outcomes than on either individual rights or "due process." Urban Thais' focus on harmony, fairness, and social order sets them close to many publics in eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union as well as in South Korea: a majority (62%) in 1995 put group harmony over individual rights.

Three-fourths of South Koreans in 1994 agreed that "the most important thing" in a democracy is to seek harmony of the group, even if individual rights are restricted. In 1997, however, in an open-ended question allowing multiple responses, more Koreans named such characteristics as freedom generally or "individual freedom" (31%) and freedom of speech (17%) more often than they cited a humane or family-oriented society (10%) and "improvement of people's consciousness" (14%). At the same time, many South Koreans (60%) admit that they do not fully understand how democracy is supposed to work in their country; a third claim to understand.

What Accounts for the Anomalies and Differences?

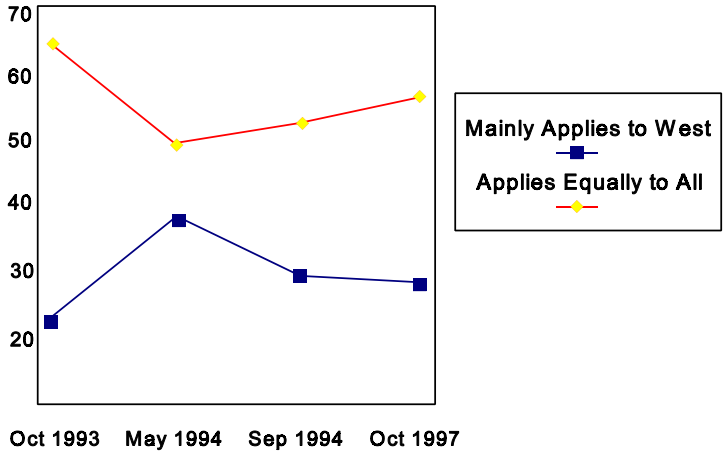
The sagging economy, labor unrest, and a major corruption scandal all appear to have contributed to Koreans' critical views of their government and public institutions. When Kim Young Sam was elected South Korea's first civilian president in three decades in 1993, three-fourths of his compatriots claimed to be satisfied with the way their system of government was working. He had vowed to clean up corruption on taking office. In 1997, even prior to the current financial crisis, scandal and the ensuing collapse of the country's second largest steel maker had darkened his government's image. Two-thirds of the public cite "widespread corruption in business and government" as the primary cause of the nation's ailing economy.

By the same token, the satisfaction vouchsafed democracy in the other two nations may be misleading. Some of the same forces at work in South Korea are working against the system in Thailand and the Philippines as well. The recent collapse of the Thai baht and ensuing economic crisis has been a severe test of the system there and has adversely affected stocks and the peso in the Philippines. Enhanced confidence in democracy and its institutions in Thailand may in part be a "bounce" effect from the forced resignation in 1992 of the military-backed Prime Minister Suchinda. Satisfaction with Philippine democracy has declined from 77 percent at the start of the Ramos administration (1994) and may nosedive further should the push to change the constitution in the president's favor bear fruit. (In late September 1997, thousands in Manila went to the streets to protest the possible Ramos reelection bid.)

Japan

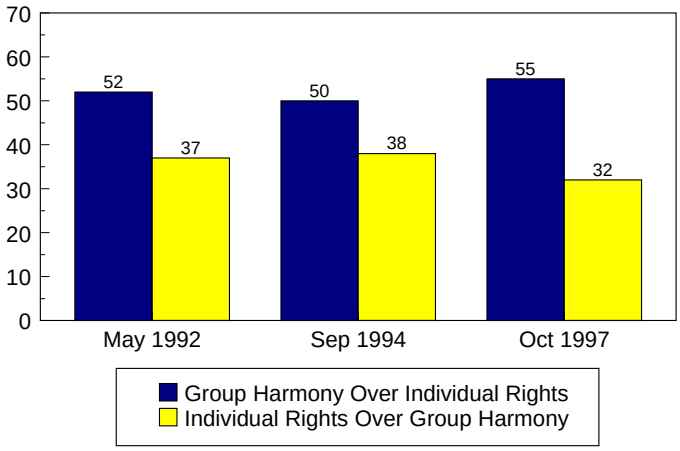
Despite all the turmoil and especially the problems posed by economic collapse elsewhere in east Asia, Japanese democracy remains strong, does it not? Probably so. By a two-to-one margin, more Japanese feel that "democracy is a universal idea that applies equally to Western and non-Western nations" (56% to 27%). A quarter believe that democracy "applies mainly to Western nations." (See figure on facing page)

Japanese Views on the Universality of Democracy



In the fall of 1997, when asked to name the most important characteristics of a democracy (multiple responses permitted), more Japanese volunteered “freedom” (21%) than such other traits as “equality” (15%) and “human rights” (11%). Smaller numbers cited “sovereignty of the people” and “peace” (7% each), “responsibility” (5%), “elections” or “cooperativeness” (both 3%).

Harmony or Individual Rights More Important?



By a slightly widening margin over the past few years, the Japanese appear to place more value on the priority of the group over the individual. While this trend can be understood as a strengthening of democracy in one sense, it may be seen as more problematic for those who feel that individual rights are the cornerstone of Western-style liberal democracy.

Democracy in Latin America

Latin America has had a variety of experiences with democratic government, from its early implementation in Chile in the 1920s to its recent restoration in Haiti. Periods of military "democracies" have scarred many countries. A few have experienced authoritarian or one-party civilian rule masquerading as democracy. Revolutionary movements have threatened or toppled some would-be democracies in the past; narcotrafficking cartels imperil at least two current regimes. Latin publics unambiguously embrace the ideals of democracy, but the foundations of a fully functioning system are still under construction in many countries. Public opinions generally reflect both the strengths and weaknesses of democracy in the region.

In the majority of Latin American nations, urban publics prefer democracy to any other form of government. Support for this absolute position, however, varies -- from highs of 71-80 percent in Argentina, Panama, Costa Rica, and Uruguay; to three-fifths in Bolivia, Colombia, Paraguay, Peru, Venezuela, and Nicaragua; to slimmer majorities in Chile and El Salvador.

Only about half in Brazil, Ecuador, Mexico, and Guatemala share this preference, and in Honduras the proportion shrinks to a plurality (42%). A quarter each in Brazil, Mexico, and Paraguay say they might prefer authoritarianism in certain circumstances; a fifth feel this way in Guatemala. These findings are not new: USIA polls since the early 1990's have found similar responses.

Preference for Democracy in South America (1996)

Best type of government:	ARG	BOL	BRA	CHI	COL	ECU	PAR	PER	URU	VEN
- Democracy preferred to any other form of gov't	71	64	50	54	60	52	59	63	80	62
- Authoritarian gov't sometimes preferable	15	17	24	19	20	18	26	13	9	19
- Type of government doesn't matter	11	15	21	23	18	23	13	14	8	13

Preference for Democracy in Mexico and Central America (1996)

Best type of government:	MEX	C.R.	GUA	HON	NIC	PAN	SAL
- Democracy preferred to any other form of gov't	53	80	51	42	59	75	56
- Authoritarian gov't sometimes preferable	23	7	21	14	14	10	12
- Type of government doesn't matter	17	8	19	29	20	12	22

As for the rest of these city dwellers, about as many say that the type of government does not matter "for people like them" as say they might prefer an authoritarian government at times.

Large majorities in all countries but Chile and Guatemala also say they would defend democracy were it threatened. In Chile, half say they would defend democracy but a third would not.

Willingness to Fight for Democracy: South America (1996)

	ARG	BOL	BRA	CHI	COL	ECU	PAR	PER	URU	VEN
- *Yes*	73	84	69	53	74	80	59	75	78	74
- *No*	15	9	25	35	22	16	14	12	11	18

Willingness to Fight for Democracy: Mexico and Central America (1996)

	MEX	C.R.	GUA	HON	NIC	PAN	SAL
- *Yes*	66	85	56	80	72	75	60
- *No*	23	7	27	10	16	13	23

A further example of Latin Americans' bent for democracy is seen in responses to the following question: *If a nondemocratic leader took power who could solve our country's economic problems, I wouldn't care if that leader took away many of the political freedoms we now have [in Brazil: . . . the loss of some of our democratic rights would be acceptable].* (See table below) Mexicans nationwide were unique among the four countries polled in mustering a large majority who would resist yielding their freedoms, and Mexico City residents were even more strongly

	Brazil (1996)	Mexico (late '95)	El Salvador (late '94)	Panama (late '94)
Strongly agree	20%	7%	14%	21%
Somewhat agree	23	14	25	21
Subtotal	***43***	***21***	***39***	***42***
Somewhat disagree	13	17	12	8
Strongly disagree	29	57	33	45
Subtotal	***42***	***74***	***45***	***53***
DK/NA	16	5	16	6

opposed to this kind of trade-off than their compatriots. Brazilians, on the other hand, were most open to this sort of deal, while substantial minorities who might jettison some freedom for economic improvement were also found in the other two countries.

Despite their support for the concept, solid majorities nationwide (ranging from 57% to 78%) in Argentina, Brazil, Guatemala, and Nicaragua say they do *not* fully understand how democracy should function in their countries. Urban publics in Chile, Costa Rica, Mexico, Peru and El Salvador feel the same. University-educated publics in all countries are much more likely than others to believe education in democracy is important.

Many Say Democracy Lags

Urban residents in many Latin American nations heavily endorse such Western-style elements of democracy as honest and regular elections, freedom of speech, and minority rights, saying that it is "very important" for these to exist in their countries. The one exception: Argentina, where between five and six in ten rate such elements so highly.

Given their high standards and expectations for democracy, it is probably no surprise that urban publics everywhere in Latin America are critical of their own brand of democracy. Except in Uruguay and Costa Rica, at least four-fifths in each country believe that there are still things to be done before they have fully established democracy in their own lands.

Achievement of Democracy in South America (1996)

	ARG	BOL	BRA	CHI	COL	ECU	PAR	PER	URU	VEN
- *Things remain to be done to achieve full democracy*	86	85	94	87	92	77	88	78	63	80
- *Democracy is fully established already*	12	13	4	10	7	20	9	14	34	16

Achievement of Democracy in Mexico and Central America (1996)

	MEX	C.R.	GUA	HON	NIC	PAN	SAL
- *Things remain to be done to achieve full democracy*	85	70	74	75	87	83	78
- *Democracy is fully established already*	10	23	6	13	7	13	10

In the same vein, nationwide majorities in several countries are not satisfied with the way their own democracy is currently functioning. According to 1996-97 USIA polls, two-thirds in

Colombia are dissatisfied (42% very dissatisfied), while three-fifths in both Bolivia and Peru feel this way (about a third in each "very"). More divided is the public in Brazil, where as many feel satisfied as dissatisfied (44% to 46%).

As the tables below show (Latinobarometer data), dissatisfaction with the way democracy is currently functioning is strongest among publics in Brazil, Venezuela and Panama, where three in ten are "not at all satisfied." Satisfaction with current democracies is also comparatively low, however, in urban areas of Colombia, Mexico, Paraguay, and Guatemala. In virtually all South American countries, and in Mexico, the levels of satisfaction have fallen since 1995 by 5, 10, and even 15-20 percent.

Satisfaction with Democracy: South America (1996)

	ARG	BOL	BRA	CHI	COL	ECU	PAR	PER	URU	VEN
Satisfied(very/smwhat)	34	25	20	27	16	34	22	28	52	30
Not very satisfied	50	58	46	54	61	47	59	53	38	41
Not at all satisfied	14	17	31	15	22	16	19	12	9	27

Satisfaction with Democracy: Mexico and Central America (1996)

	MEX	C.R.	GUA	NIC	PAN	SAL
Satisfied (very/somewhat)	11	51	16	23	28	26
Not very satisfied	51	35	47	49	42	41
Not at all satisfied	33	8	27	23	29	27

Satisfaction is probably linked to how effective people feel their system is or can be. In a 1995 survey among urbanites in seven South American nations and Mexico, only in Peru did a clear majority (62%) believe that democracy permits solutions for the problems in their nation. A slim majority (54%) in Uruguay and half (52%) in Argentina felt this way. Elsewhere (Brazil, Chile, Mexico, and Venezuela), opinion divided evenly on whether or not democracy could solve their problems. In Paraguay many more were negative than positive on this score (53% to 34%).

Confidence in Public Institutions Low

Discontent with democracy is also related to views on public institutions. In mid-1996, urban residents in most South American countries and Mexico expressed distrust in key institutions. Seven in ten or more have little or no confidence in their countries' political parties, national congress (legislature), or the police. Six in ten or more express little or no confidence in either the judiciary or the "administration." The exceptions are Chile and Peru, where half the urban populace do have at least a fair amount of confidence in their governments.

In contrast, half the urban public in Chile, solid majorities in Brazil (66%) and Venezuela (59%), and three-fourths in Ecuador (76%) view their militaries with some confidence.

Confidence in Public Institutions: South America and Mexico (1996)

% "not very" or "not at all" confident in:	ARG	BOL	BRA	CHI	COL	ECU	PER	VEN	MEX
Armed Forces	65	63	36	48	55	23	47	40	58
Judiciary	73	73	58	62	67	67	71	70	78
Government	77	79	75	48	81	64	49	82	81
Congress	71	75	79	55	83	71	61	79	73
Police	73	81	74	52	75	64	67	82	86
Public Administration	77	76	72	58	79	70	68	78	77
Political Parties	80	83	83	70	87	81	74	87	80

Problems with Realizing Democracy

Successful democracies typically demand an active civil society whose members share many values, including the rule of law, pluralism, the desire of each to contribute to the well-being of all, and trust in one's fellow citizens.

Lack of trust and involvement. In two different multicountry surveys in 1996, Latin American publics reveal serious mistrust of their compatriots. In a USIA-commissioned study, only minorities (from 25% in Costa Rica to 44% in Brazil) believe they can trust their neighbors and fellow workers "to do what is right most of the time." In all eight countries surveyed, younger publics are considerably *less* likely than others to believe neighbors and co-workers can be trusted.

In the second project, conducted in eight South American nations and in Mexico, the results on a similar but slightly different question are, if anything, even worse:

Trust in Others: South America and Mexico

In general, would you say that you can trust most people, or that you can never be too careful when dealing with others?	ARG	BOL	BRA	CHI	COL	ECU	PER	VEN	MEX
Can trust most people	23	17	11	18	23	20	13	11	21
Can never be too careful	74	81	87	80	76	78	79	86	76

The lack of trust may in turn help explain why most Latin Americans do not volunteer for or participate in local civic groups and a comparative lack of community spirit. Three in ten or fewer in eight South American countries and Mexico (especially fewer in Argentina) say they have participated in community-type activities such as *belonging to a sport or volunteer youth*

group, a church volunteer group, or *a nonchurch-affiliated volunteer group* in the past six months. Nor have they worked with a *neighborhood association* or *the local PTA*, or *belonged to a labor union.* Those aged 18-24 are considerably more likely than the public at large to participate in youth groups; the middle-aged are more likely than others to attend PTA meetings. Few over 55 participate in any group. Apparently many participate in community/volunteer groups primarily because other family members belong.

Data from six of the nine countries suggest that religion also plays a role: Protestants and Evangelicals are almost twice as likely as Roman Catholics to participate in church-affiliated volunteer groups.

Respect for the law. Publics in the Andean region are perhaps most challenged in this regard -- by the effects of corruption from illegal drug traffickers -- yet these publics strongly believe in the importance of the law. In Bolivia and Colombia -- two countries which rank at the top of many lists of most corrupt nations -- and in Peru, the overwhelming majority (78-86%) say that it is *not* all right to break the law, even "if you are certain no one will catch you." In drug-cartel-ridden Colombia, about three-fourths feel this way strongly. Only 12-15 percent feel that it is okay to do so. Elsewhere, a solid majority (62%) in Brazil also feel this way.

Why the Difficulties with Democracy?

What explains the lack of trust (in officials and fellow-citizens), dissatisfaction and disillusion with the system, and lack of participation which are so important in making a democracy work? The data suggest several explanations:

(1) Few find much to applaud about their **government and its policies**, in part due to unmet expectations. Almost all these countries face a variety of economic problems, including runaway inflation and high unemployment. Large majorities everywhere but Mexico (small majorities) believe their governments should provide work for all, reduce the gaps between rich and poor, and provide a welfare net for the disadvantaged -- the unemployed, sick, and elderly.

(2) There is a widespread belief in most Latin American nations that corruption (and crime) has increased significantly over the past five years (fewer say this in Chile and Peru). (See table on following page)

Corruption in South America and Mexico (1996)

In the past 5 years, has corruption . . .	Argen-tina	Bolivia	Brazil	Chile	Colom-bia	Ecua-dor	Peru	Vene-zuela	Mexico
increased a lot	87%	74%	64%	51%	76%	84%	48%	93%	76%
increased a little	5	11	16	21	12	9	20	3	12
stayed the same	5	10	12	18	8	5	20	3	9
decreased a little	1	3	6	5	2	1	9	1	1
decreased a lot	-	1	-	1	1	-	1	-	-
DK/NA	2	1	1	4	1	1	3	-	2

In a separate 1996 survey, urban Mexicans overwhelmingly believe (83%) that there is "a great deal" of corruption in their country. An additional 13 percent say that there is "a fair amount" of it in Mexico. People tend to link corruption directly to their views on public institutions.

(3) The **efficacy of elections** is widely suspect. While many believe voting can effect changes for the better, there is no widespread feeling of empowerment. A slim majority in Colombia and half in Mexico believe that, no matter if one votes, things will not improve. In Bolivia about as many say that voting can change the future as disagree. Urban publics in Argentina, Brazil, and Ecuador most often feel voting can change things.

Moreover, many believe that their own elections are rigged. Six in ten or more in six South American nations believe this (81% in Brazil and 85% in Venezuela say they are). Argentine and Peruvian opinions are split. Only in Chile does a large majority believe elections are "clean" and honest.

Does Voting Make a Difference? South America and Mexico (1996)

Some people say voting can change the future; others say that no matter how you vote, things will not improve in the future.	ARG	BOL	BRA	CHI	COL	ECU	PER	VEN	MEX
Voting can change the future	63	51	61	49	43	58	52	49	46
Voting will not improve things	29	47	37	45	54	37	35	40	51

(4) Finally, there are mixed impressions about the overall **political situation** in each country. Six in ten or more urban residents in Colombia, Mexico and Venezuela -- and about half in

Argentina and Brazil -- say the situation is “bad.” Majorities in Chile and Peru, and pluralities in Bolivia and Ecuador, call their situation “neither good nor bad.” Most expect no change over the coming twelve months, although Venezuelans are clearly pessimistic (55% expect the situation to worsen).

Democracy in Haiti

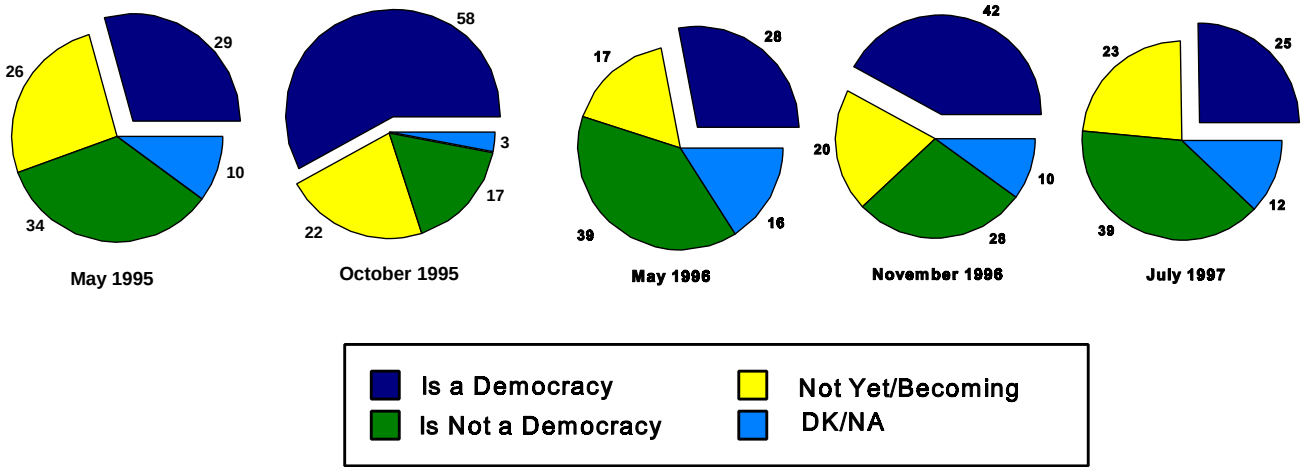
USIA's latest poll of urban Haitians, in late July 1997, suggests that democracy continues to lose ground in that troubled nation. The survey followed nationwide elections in April in which the large majority of Haitians did not vote. In economic and social conditions which continue to deteriorate for most urban Haitians, many appear to have lost hope that anyone -- least of all their government -- will be able to improve conditions.

Half (53%) of the urban populace candidly admit that they "do not fully understand how democracy is supposed to work" in Haiti -- though a lower proportion than elsewhere in Latin America. Two-fifths (38%) claim to have a good understanding of how it is supposed to work.

Not Yet a Democracy

More city dwellers now believe that Haiti is *not* a democracy than say it is (39% to 25%), but another quarter feel that it is "becoming a democracy." This is a reversal of opinion since last November, when affirmers outweighed deniers by 42 percent to 28 percent, but in line with other shifts over the past two years. Perhaps equally disturbing is the finding that, among the plurality saying Haiti is not *now* a democracy, the view that Haiti will *never* have a well-functioning democracy prevails over the opposite view by a two-to-one margin (24% to 10%).

Is Haiti a Democracy?



When asked in May of 1995 and again the following year what the word "democracy" means, a plurality offered "equal rights, respect for each other." Another quarter said "freedom" -- freedom of speech, freedom to act, to live. These sentiments were mirrored by those who felt that their country was not a democracy in 1996. The three main reasons they cited for their

belief: lack of respect for others (20%), lack of education about democracy (10%), and the absence of freedom (9%).

A Censorious Public Demands More of Their Leaders

Two-thirds of urban Haitians say the government is functioning *not very well* (30%) or *not well at all* (34%) and, of these, just over one in ten (14%) expect improvement in the next year. Those who believe government is functioning badly were asked the main reason for this opinion. About a fourth each (27%) say either that government in general is inept, unaccountable, unable to solve problems or that difficult living conditions make things hard for the government to work well. Still, 14 percent cite incompetent or corrupt officials as the primary reason for the malfunctioning government. Another tenth (11%) mention faulty government policies and lack of social services.

In general, the higher the educational level, the more likely that blame is directed at those in positions of responsibility rather than at the domestic situation in Haiti.

Overall, the public is doubtful of the future. Six in ten believe the government will *not* make any headway in the next twelve months on resolving the country's most serious problems, compared to just fifteen percent who think it will. Pro-reform Prime Minister Rosny Smarth's resignation shortly before interviewing began probably reinforced existing scepticism.

Back in May 1995, *half* expected to see progress. Residents of poorer cities are more negative on these (and other) issues. Even among erstwhile supporters of the current president -- members of the OPL party -- the proportion of those skeptical about the government's ability to resolve problems runs as high as three-fourths.

Majorities believe their senators and deputies (57%) and mayors (54%) care *nothing at all* about the problems facing people and that newly elected municipal authorities (57%) will *not* be capable of resolving community problems.

Attitudes Translate into Behavior

The same issue of the quality and ethics of their own officials and candidates for public office plays a huge role in elections**.** When asked why they think most Haitians did not vote in the April 6 elections, a plurality (21%) say "people are discouraged, disappointed with government" and "have no confidence that candidates will do anything to resolve their problems." Many nonvoters say they themselves did not vote because "they don't trust politicians or candidates; politicians just tell lies and fill their own pockets, they won't vote for 'hooligans.'" Lack of interest, of a voter's card, or of transportation were also mentioned as reasons for not voting.

Few show much respect -- or desire to vote -- for public officials or local candidates. A plurality cite either discouragement with government and lack of confidence in candidates (21%) or disgust with lying and corrupt candidates (10%) as the reason for not voting in the April 6

election. Few think elected officials care about constituents or will do anything to resolve local problems.

Trust Declines in Public Institutions and Leaders

Public support for President Preval has fallen twenty-one points since the November 1996 survey (to 48%). About four in ten (37%) think he is doing a good job as President, down from 65 percent last November. Key institutions have also seen positive ratings plummet or turn negative. Now, about half (54%) express little or no confidence in the Preval administration; one-third express at least *some* confidence. In a different measurement, in November 1996, six in ten urban Haitians held a *good* opinion of the administration.

Just two in ten (22%) express confidence in the current Parliament; two-thirds say they have *little* (19%) *or no* confidence (46%) in that stalemated legislative body. By contrast, just one-fourth held a poor opinion of Parliament in November 1996. Parliament's job performance rating has also fallen precipitously in 1997: half (54%) now think Parliament is doing a *poor* job at "passing necessary laws for the country," compared to the same proportion in November 1996 (53%) who said it was doing a *good* job.

Only a minority of urban Haitians (17%) express any confidence in the controversial Electoral Council (CEP), center of bitter disputes over vote-counting procedures and anomalies in the April 6 elections. Half the public (52%) say they have *no* confidence *at all* in the CEP. In contrast, just before the presidential elections in October 1995, a significant majority of Haitians held a *good* opinion of the Council.

Two-thirds (63%) of the urban public now have *little or no* confidence in Haiti's justice system, compared to just half who, in a different question, expressed a poor opinion in November 1996. In general, OPL sympathizers and those with secondary or university educations are slightly more likely to be supportive of government institutions, while those with little or no education more often express no opinions about them.

The only government institution which has retained -- indeed *improved* -- its approval rating over recent months is the National Police. Despite recurring incidents of crime and violence on Haitian streets, an overwhelming majority (81%) feel the police are doing at least a fairly *good* job at "maintaining law and order" (31% say "very" good). This is the highest rating the police have received in USIA polls and represents a significant increase in public support from November 1996, when just over half (56%) thought they were doing a good job.

Democracy in the United States

Americans express great pride in their country. When asked which specific achievements give rise to these feelings, in 1996 four-fifths (78%) say they are proud of "the way democracy works" in the U.S. -- ranking this sixth among the ten achievements listed. (Past surveys have shown that Americans express much more pride in their country than the publics in other advanced democracies -- e.g., Japan and western Europe).

What Makes Americans Proud (2-4/96)	***Very proud***	***Somewhat Proud***	***Subtotal: Proud***	***Not proud***
Scientific and technological achievements	48%	41%	89%	5%
Armed forces	46	39	85	9
History	47	36	83	12
Sports	35	47	82	11
Arts and literature	28	52	80	11
Way Democracy Works	**27**	**51**	**78**	**16**
Economic achievements	27	49	76	17
U.S. political influence in the world	20	54	74	19
Fair and equal treatment of all groups in society	17	37	54	40
Social Security system	13	34	47	47

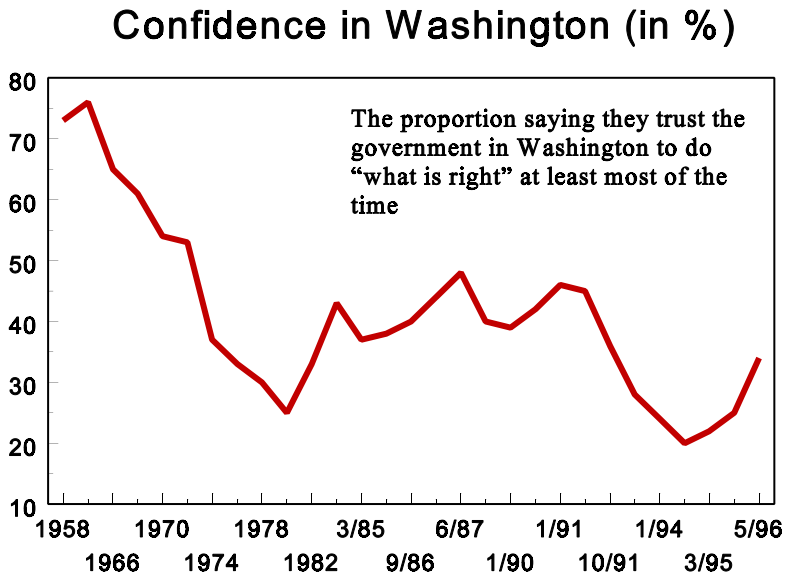
About four-fifths also believe that "whatever its faults, the United States still has the best system of government in the world." (Eighty-three percent agree with this statement vs. 15% who disagree.) Most Americans, in fact, feel that the U.S. political system has some faults -- but not enough to require drastic change.

The question "All in all, how well or badly do you think the system of democracy in America works these days?" receives the following responses:

American democracy (2-4/96):	
Works well and needs *no changes*	**4%**
Works well but needs *some changes*	**63**
Does not work well and needs *a lot of changes*	**23**
Does not work well and needs to be *completely changed*	**4**
No opinion	**6**

Trust in the "Government in Washington" -- A Downward Spiral

Several polling organizations have regularly used the same question to gauge the public's trust of the federal government: "How much of the time do you think you can trust the government in Washington to do what is right -- just about always, most of the time, or only some of the time?" Confidence in the federal government has dropped sharply during the past 30-40 years. In the 1960's, better than three-fifths of Americans believed the "government in Washington" could be trusted to do "what is right" at least *most of the time*. In the 1970's and 1980's, about two-fifths



on the average believed the federal government could be trusted to that extent. Since 1992, no more than one-third on any poll have expressed this view, compared to at least two-thirds now who think the federal government can be trusted no more than *some of the time*. Lack of trust has more than doubled since the 1960's -- from about 30 percent then to nearly 70 percent today.

Public confidence in politics generally and in many nongovernmental institutions has also declined since the 1960's. This is reflected in the sharp increase in the Harris Poll's "Alienation Index" -- from 29 percent in 1966 (average response on five different questions measuring social and political estrangement) to a peak of 67 percent in late 1995. Harris's late 1996 measurement shows a decline of five points in the index (from 67% in December 1995 to 62% in December 1996). On Harris's December 1996 poll, for example, 59% agree with the statement, "The people running the country don't really care what happens to you" and 65% agree that "What you think doesn't count very much anymore."

Concerning the separation of powers, a Gallup poll taken in late spring 1997 asked respondents "how much trust and confidence" they had in each branch of the federal government. The judicial branch comes in best, with seven in ten expressing at least a fair amount of confidence. The "executive branch headed by the President" falls about midway between the judicial and legislative branches, with nearly twice as many voicing confidence as saying they lack it. Nearly as many lack confidence as have it in the legislature (44% to 54%).

Degree of Confidence in the Branches of the Federal Government (6/97):	***Great Deal***	***Fair Amount***	***Not Very Much***	***None***
Judicial branch, headed by the U.S. Supreme Court	19%	52%	22%	5%
Executive Branch, headed by the President	13	49	27	9
Legislative branch, consisting of the U.S. Senate & House of Representatives	6	48	36	8

Is "All Politics [Still] Local"?

Americans' views of Washington, however, are not the only story. Various polls in recent years have shown that public confidence in the federal government is lower than confidence in state and especially local governments. For example, a Hart-Teeter poll, sponsored by the Council for Excellence in Government, recorded these findings in February 1997:

Level of Confidence by Type of Government (2/97):	***Great Deal***	***Quite a Lot***	***Subtotal - Confidence***	***Some***	***Very Little***	***Subtotal - Lack of Confidence***
The federal government	6%	16%	**22%**	45%	32%	**77%**
Your state government	8	24	**32**	47	20	**67**
Your local or community government	12	26	**38**	38	22	**60**
The military	27	30	**57**	31	10	**41**
The church/organized religion	30	24	**54**	27	14	**41**

This set of polls shows that confidence in every level of government has risen between 5-10 percentage points since previously measured in March 1995 (including for the federal government, despite the long-term trend noted). Nevertheless, confidence in every level of government remains far below confidence in "the military" or "the church or organized religion."

Americans differentiate, furthermore, in where they place their (relative) trust by the functions governments perform. Several recent polls have asked the public which level of government they think can best handle different types of problems. These polls show most Americans view the national government as best able to "improve the economy," safeguard the environment, protect civil rights, "provide services to immigrants," set health standards for the food we consume, and ensure the nation's security. But state governments are widely viewed as best able to "improve public education," provide job training, and set rules for receiving public assistance. Local governments are widely seen as best able to "fight crime" and pass local ordinances governing such activities as smoking in public.

"In which level of government do you have the most trust and confidence to handle each of the following problems most effectively?" (1/97)	**Federal**	**State**	**Local**
Provide services to immigrants	62%	19%	11%
Protect civil rights	59	21	13
Provide health care for the disabled, poor and elderly	44	36	15
Establish rules on who can receive welfare or public assistance for poor people	28	44	23
Provide early education to low-income children	25	39	32
Fight crime	24	26	42
Provide job training	20	45	30

"Now I would like to read you a list of issues facing the country. Please tell me, for each one, which level of government you think can best deal with that issue ..." (11/96)	Federal	State	Local
Improving the economy	65%	20%	8%
Handling health care issues	46	37	10
Reforming the welfare system	42	42	10
Providing a safety net, or the basic necessities of shelter, food and emergency health care	31	38	24
Fighting crime and drugs	30	32	31
Improving public education	18	46	31

Why Are Americans Displeased with Their Democratic Government?

Various polls have explored the reasons for Americans' reduced trust in the federal government. The main reasons offered by the public can be grouped as follows, from most to least influential on people's confidence in the government:

Reasons Listed for Distrust of the Federal Government (1995-97):	***Composite percentage naming item as a "major reason"***
Waste in government spending; government inefficiency	80%
Elected officials pursue their own personal agenda, not the voters' priorities	70
Special interests have too much influence	65
Elected officials lack honesty, integrity	60
Government interferes too much in people's lives	45
Too much partisan politics	30
Complaints about specific, unresolved problems:	
Crime, drugs	60
Federal taxes are too high, unfair	50
Poor condition of our public education system	40
Failure to protect American jobs and living standards	40

These findings, particularly the comparative lack of trust in government at all levels, evoke alarm in some observers.[14] Yet declining participation in elections is not necessarily a condemnation of the political process, nor is throwing out incumbents a revolutionary procedure. These attitudes and behaviors seem consistent with a public displaying a healthy skepticism of those in power, and their potential to abuse that power, yet still adhering to "the basic social compact" of American democracy.

What these findings seem to confirm is that it is the government's *performance* in various tasks rather than the government itself or the form of government that engenders distrust. Are disappointed expectations mostly to blame for the poor performance ratings of the government? Or, put more bluntly, do Americans expect too much of their leaders?

How Americans View the Role of Government

In the abstract, the bulk of Americans believe they would be better off having less government than they now have. More Americans say the government is already doing too many things better left to business and individuals than say the government should do more to solve national problems (58% to 34% in February 1997).

However, when asked in the same poll who should be responsible for solving our country's problems, the public mentions *the government* more often than all nongovernmental entities combined:

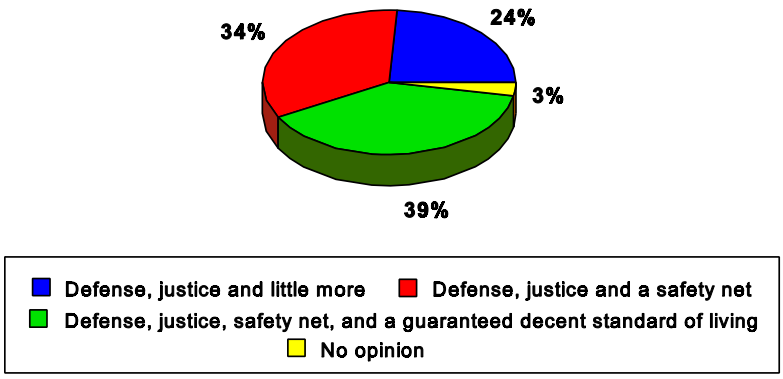
"Who do you think should be most responsible for solving problems facing the nation -- government, business, individuals, or nonprofit and charitable organizations?"

Government	44%
Nongovernment: Total	39
Individuals	33
Business	3
Nonprofit/charitable groups	3
All equal (volunteered)	10
Other, Don't Know	7

Also, when asked about the extent of the role that government should play in the U.S., three-fourths want something more than the bare minimum from their government. Only a quarter of

the public believe the government should do “as little as possible” after providing for the nation’s defense and the fair administration of justice.

What Americans Want From Their Government (11/96)



Previous surveys have shown Americans distinguish between certain functions they believe government should take primary responsibility for (e.g., education, care for the elderly, reducing crime, reducing illegal immigration) and functions which the public thinks should be left mainly in the hands of business, community leaders or other individuals (e.g., child care centers, support of the arts, improving moral values). Some functions are widely viewed as being the shared responsibility of government and nongovernmental organizations -- e.g., creating jobs, job training, reducing pollution, and health care.

Conclusion

Values, Values, Values

Few commentators on democracy have been more astute than the Russian novelist Fedor Dostoevsky. At the center of his masterpiece *The Brothers Karamazov*, Dostoevsky places a dialogue between Jesus Christ and the Grand Inquisitor which speaks to the problem of human values -- and modern democracy. The Inquisitor taunts Christ with the claim that God's greatest gift to mankind, freedom, is a burden on most humans and that, deep down, the great majority of people want bread (security) rather than freedom.

In many of today's transitional societies, that same longing for stability, order, and economic prosperity appears to outweigh the perceived blessings of democracy. In more mature democracies, freedom and liberal ideals seem to be holding their own against the yearning for security-at-any-cost. Arthur Schlesinger, in a recent piece in *Foreign Affairs*, looks at this dichotomy in terms of Western versus Asian values: "The Asian tradition, we are told, values the group more than the individual, order more than argument, authority more than liberty, solidarity more than freedom."[15]

As important as cultural values, moreover, are certain psychological attitudes which democracy demands in order to work well. Among democracy's requisite traits are the ability to compromise, not to see things totally in black and white, to avoid putting things into the context of a "zero-sum game." If it means anything, democracy means sharing -- the sharing of power and of resources. "Winner takes all" cannot work in a democracy. If losers lose all, they are more reluctant to play the democratic game.

How Comparable are the World's Democracies?

Are the values that Westerners prize in their democracies universal and absolute, or is democracy a relative thing? By exploring the values and views of various countries around the world, this report has shown that there are significant differences that separate today's democracies. Despite the differences, some core values remain common to most.

Whether a country has a two-party or multiparty system, frequent or infrequent elections, and a presidential or parliamentary regime is not of great consequence. In whatever circumstances, wherever some kind of pluralism takes hold and individuals' rights are upheld, democracy flourishes. Neglect all of the values and attitudes which nourish democracy, and the system dies.

Appendix: A List of Polls

Country	Date	Sample Size & Type	Firm
Central and Eastern Europe States			
Bulgaria	Sep 1997	1032 nationwide	Center for the Study of Democracy
Czech Republic	Sep 1997	1207 nationwide	AISA
Hungary	Sep 1997	1000 nationwide	Median
Poland	Sep/Oct 1997	980 nationwide	DEMOSKOP
Romania	Sep 1997	1018 nationwide	IMAS
Slovakia	Sep 1997	1144 nationwide	AISA
Turkey	Sep 1997	1112 nationwide	Strateji Mori
Bosnia Hercegovina	Jan 1997	2967 nationwide	Puls (Hercegovina and Central Bosnia) Medium (RS)
Croatia	Nov 1996	987 nationwide	Puls
Bulgaria	Mar 1996	1150 nationwide	Center for the Study of Democracy
Czech Republic	Apr/May 1996	1169 nationwide	AISA
Hungary	Mar/Apr 1996	1000 nationwide	TARKI
Poland	Jul 1996	1088 nationwide	DEMOSKOP
Romania	Mar/Apr 1996	1198 nationwide	IMAS
Slovakia	Apr/May 1996	1183 nationwide	AISA
Turkey	Jul/Aug 1996	1142 nationwide	Strateji Mori
	May 1997	1130 nationwide	Strateji Mori
Russia, Ukraine, and Commonwealth States			
Armenia	May/Jun 1996	1000 nationwide	Yerevan State University
Azerbaijan	Sep 1996	1000 nationwide	SORGU
Belarus	Apr/May 1997	1073 nationwide	NOVAK
Georgia	Dec 1996	1020 nationwide	SOCIOGEO
Russia	Mar/Apr 1997	1868 nationwide	CESSI
Russia	Oct 1996	1800 nationwide	ROMIR
Ukraine	Oct/Nov 1996	1200 nationwide	Kiev International Institute of Sociology
Ukraine	Dec 1995/Jan 1996	1200 nationwide	SOCIS
Africa			
Angola	Jul/Aug 1996	2001 urban and suburban regions	BBC
Ethiopia	Dec 1995/Jan 1996	1000 nationwide urban	Research International
Kenya	Mar/Apr 1997	2017 major urban/rural	Markinor

Nigeria	Mar/Apr 1997	2130 nationwide urban/ rural	RMS Ltd.
South Africa	Feb/Mar 1997	1992 nationwide urban	Markinor
	Aug 1997	1495 nationwide urban	Markinor
South Asia			
India	Aug/Sep 1997	1527 urban	ORG-MARG
Pakistan	Jul 1997	800 urban	Aftab
East and Southeast Asia			
Japan	Oct 1997	1048 nationwide	Shin Joho
The Philippines	Aug 1996	1500 nationwide	Frank Small & Assoc.
South Korea	Sep 1997	1512 nationwide	Gallup Korea
Thailand	Sep 1995	1000 urban	Frank Small & Assoc.
Latin America			
Argentina	Jun/Jul 1996	1200 nationwide urban	Latinobarometer
Bolivia	Jun/Jul 1996	772 nationwide urban	Latinobarometer
Brazil	Jun/Jul 1996	1080 nationwide urban	Latinobarometer
Chile	Jun 1996	1200 nationwide urban	Latinobarometer
Colombia	Jun 1996	1200 nationwide urban	Latinobarometer
Ecuador	Jul 1996	1200 nationwide	Latinobarometer
Mexico	Jun 1996	1526 nationwide urban	Latinobarometer
Paraguay	Jun/Jul 1996	598 nationwide urban	Latinobarometer
Peru	Jun 1996	1200 nationwide urban	Latinobarometer
Uruguay	Jun/Jul 1996	1200 nationwide	Latinobarometer
Venezuela	Jun/Jul 1996	1500 nationwide urban	Latinobarometer
Costa Rica	Jul 1996	1005 nationwide urban	Latinobarometer
El Salvador	Jul 1996	1003 nationwide urban	Latinobarometer
Guatemala	Jul 1996	998 nationwide urban	Latinobarometer
Honduras	Jul 1996	1001 nationwide urban	Latinobarometer
Nicaragua	Jul 1996	1033 nationwide urban	Latinobarometer
Panama	Jul 1996	1002 nationwide urban	Latinobarometer
Argentina	Apr 1996	1000 nationwide	Mora y Aruajo
Bolivia	Nov/Dec 1996	1200, cities of 10,000+	APOYO
Brazil	Mar/Apr 1996	1500 nationwide	IBOPE
Colombia	Nov/Dec 1996	1200, cities of 10,000+	Invamer-Limitada
Guatemala	Apr 1996	1205 nationwide	CID-Gallup
Nicaragua	Apr 1996	1002 nationwide	CID-Gallup
Peru	Nov/Dec 1996	1203, cities of 10,000+	APOYO

Chile	Jul 1996	1000, 3 major cities	MORI Chile
Costa Rica	Jul/Aug 1996	1000, 6 largest cities	CID-Gallup
El Salvador	Mar 1996	1000 San Salvador only	CID-Gallup
Haiti	May 1996	1208, 3 major cities	Saint-dic et Saint-dic
Haiti	Nov 1996	1299, 5 major cities	Saint-dic et Saint-dic
Haiti	Jul 1997	1351, 5 major cities	Saint-dic et Saint-dic
Mexico	Jul/Aug 1996	1001, 3 major cities	Gallup-Mexico
Mexico	Mar 1997	1015, 5-city phone poll	Gallup-Mexico
United States of America			
United States	May/Jun 1997	935 nationwide	Gallup/*USA Today*
United States	Feb 1997	1276 nationwide	CBS News
United States	Feb 1997	1003 nationwide	Hart-Teeter (Council for Excellence in Government)
United States	Jan 1997	1503 nationwide	PEW Center for the People and the Press
United States	Nov 1996	1000 registered voters	*US News and World Report*/Lake and Tarrance
United States	Apr/May 1996	1024 nationwide	ABC News
United States	Feb/Apr 1996	2904 nationwide	NORC/General Social Survey
United States	Jan/Apr 1996	2047 nationwide	Gallup/Post-Modernity Project
United States	Nov/Dec 1995	1514 nationwide	*Washington Post*/Kaiser Foundation/ Harvard University Survey
United States	Mar 1995	1003 nationwide	Hart-Teeter (Council for Excellence in Government)
United States	Dec 1994	1968 nationwide	Roper

Notes

1. Usually posed as a question, as here, the ultimate aim of such queries is often prescriptive. Cf. Larry Diamond, *Promoting Democracy in the 1990s: Actors and Instruments, Issues and Imperatives. A Report to the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict* (December 1995).

2. As a Polish anecdote of some years ago had it:

Q. So, what's the difference between a democracy and a "people's democracy?"

A. The same as between a jacket and a straitjacket.

3. Fareed Zakaria, "The Rise of Illiberal Democracy," *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 1997, pp. 22-43.

4. Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., "Has Democracy a Future?", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 76, No. 5 (September/October 1997), p. 7. The reverse connection is also made: "Democracy is fostering market-oriented reforms in Latin America. . . . Only the democratic opposition can *guarantee* the future course of a market economy. When the opposition is committed to the market economy, its victory brings policy changes in its wake but no rewriting of the fundamental rules that govern the economy . . . and it is the key to the contribution of democracy for markets in Latin America in the 1990s." (*Wall Street Journal*, August 1, 1997, p. A15.

5. Paul Goble, "Hyphenated Democracy," *Central Asia Monitor*, No. 3, 1997, p. 16. Schlesinger (*ibid.*) makes a similar but slightly different point.

6. Musing on diverse forms of government, the French *philosophe* Montesquieu wrote in his 18th-century treatise *On the Spirit of the Laws* that it is essential for the citizens of a democracy to display virtue.

7. By contrast, earlier USIA findings in western Europe showed that publics in Germany and Great Britain rank political rights most important.

8. USIA surveys and other research have consistently found ambivalence among Hungarians toward their new regime. This finding is likely due partly to a tendency toward pessimism among the Hungarian public but partly to the fact that Hungary in 1989 had one of the more liberal regimes and was further along in the transformation process than other countries in the region, perhaps leading the public to have higher expectations for rapid improvement.

9. A notable exception is Bulgaria, where confidence in government is at its highest point since 1989. This survey was taken a few months after the presidential elections in October-November 1996 in which opposition leader Petar Stoyanov was elected.

10. The national government in Serbia had held the confidence of a slim majority of Serbs during the year preceding the election-related protests in the fall of 1996, after which support dropped by half (down to just 23%) in a winter 1997 survey.

11. In a different question, asked to choose which is the *most important priority* for their country from a list, a third each select "pursuit of democratic principles" (33%) and economic reforms (34%) -- the two top choices. Many fewer choose such items as good relations with the West (12%) or administering the country in accord with Islamic law (9%).

12. In a different question posed in 1996, comparatively few (21%) said that they trust the government "to do what is right most of the time." The majority then trusted the government "only sometimes" (50%) or "almost never" (22%).

13. See the conference report "Democracy in South Asia" produced by the National Endowment for Democracy's International Forum for Democratic Studies in August 1997, pp. 9-11.

14. For example, The Kettering Foundation writes, in a recent publication, about the "disconnect" between the American public and the U.S. political system. What could once be dismissed as mere apathy is seen as a more ominous malady: "Polls show that Americans are losing confidence in nearly all of their major institutions." The "widening gap that separates the people of this country from their governments [federal and local]" threatens to undermine "the basic social compact that provides legitimacy for a representative government." (David Mathews, "Defining the Disconnect," *Connections*, VIII, No. 1 (June 1997), p.2.

Cf. two articles which both appeared on December 23, 1997, the first by Charles Murray ("Americans Remain Wary of Washington," *The Wall Street Journal*, p. A14) and the second by Benjamin Tyree ("Symptoms of eroding faith in government," *The Washington Times*, p. A12).

15. Schlesinger, *op. cit.*, p. 9.